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OPINION METER

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INSIDE



Found Dead

A missing 9-year-old Indiana girl is found dead and her babysitter is arrested.

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Death Toll

The death toll from floods in the Philippines climbs to nearly 1,500.

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New Painting

A painting of George Washington crossing the Delaware River got much of the story wrong.

LIFE & STYLE...Page 19

BOE PROBE FINDS VIOLATION OF PSS POLICY

'Some employees improperly cashed out their annual leave'

» **Recipients of improper payouts told to return money**

By **MONETH G. DEPOSA**
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Board of Education has found out that some non-certified employees of the Public School System improperly cashed out their annual leaves and were ordered yesterday to return the money.

In a letter to Education Commissioner Rita A. Sablan, board chair MaryLou S. Ada instructed the commissioner to immediately implement specific directives to avert future incidents like these.

The board initiated the investigation after learning that some certified and non-certified personnel have been making illegal cash out of annual leaves. It

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2012 CNMI PHONE BOOK

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial, seated right, and Lt. Gov. Eloy Inos, seated left, get the first copies of the 2012 CNMI Phone Book from, from left, IT&E marketing manager Hans Mickelson, IT&E wireless and marketing supervisor Veronica Acosta, Yellow Pages Ink business account manager Julie Manglona, and IT&E marketing coordinator Brad Ruzsala. The full shipment of 30,000 phone books are expected to arrive in the Marianas during the first week of January and will be available for distribution soon thereafter.

Abramoff: Gingrich wanted CNMI, Guam, A. Samoa be part of Hawaii

» **Kili says delegate could do more than a lobbyist**

By **HAIDEE V. EUGENIO**
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REPORTER

At the height of convicted felon and former CNMI lobbyist Jack Abramoff's

efforts to stave off attempts to federalize CNMI immigration, he approached then U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich—now vying for the U.S. presidency—but was stunned by the latter's



Abramoff

suggestion to make the CNMI, Guam, and American Samoa be part of Hawaii.

"That way, they can all have a congressman and be a real part of the United States," Abramoff quoted Gin-

See GINGRICH on Page 4

Senate OKs 5 measures to help save Fund

By **HAIDEE V. EUGENIO**
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REPORTER

The Senate passed yesterday two bills and three initiatives aimed at prolonging the lifespan of the NMI Retirement Fund but held off action on a controversial House bill allowing withdrawal of retirement contributions, mainly because of concerns over the Senate-proposed amendment calling for "rollover" instead of "withdrawal" of contributions.

By a vote of 6-1 with one abstention and one absence, the Senate passed a bill repealing a three-month-old law allowing Fund beneficiaries to sue on behalf of the pension program if the board refuses to bring such legal action.

Most of those who voted in support of the original bill that became Public Law 17-51—including the original bill's author, Senate floor leader Pete Reyes (R-Saipan)—had a change of heart and backed the repealer, Senate Bill 17-94, Senate Draft 2.

Reyes said he now supports repeal of the law because the law's objective had already been achieved. At the time, proponents of the bill wanted the Fund

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RELATED NEWS

► **Fund's opportunity losses increasing due to delay of repealer.**

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FAST FACTS

The five bills and initiatives that the Senate passed to help the Retirement Fund:

1. SENATE BILL 17-94, SD1: Repeals the beneficiary derivative lawsuit law

2. SENATE BILL 17-99, SD1: Transfers the administrative functions of the Government Life and Health Insurance Program from Retirement Fund to the Department of Finance.

3. SENATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE 17-13, SS1, SD1: Transfers management decisions of public land golf course leases to the Fund.

4. SENATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE 17-14, SD1: Transfers funds from the Marianas Public Land Trust to the Fund.

5. SENATE LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVE 17-15, SD1: Sets aside 25 percent of government revenues to pay the government's employer contribution to the Fund.

Judge recuses self from lawsuit over casino bill. PAGE 3
Semester ends with SHEFA grants still pending. PAGE 6

Local

Lawmaker raises concerns over Aetna contract

» Commerce says issues already incorporated in new rate options

By MONETH G. DEPOSA
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REPORTER

Rep. Stanley Torres (Ind-Saipan) has raised some concerns about the rate plans offered by health insurance carrier Aetna Global for retirees and members of the NMI Retirement Fund.

Torres told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that he wrote to Fund board chair Sixto K. Igisomar and Fund administrator Richard Villagomez more than a month ago for clarification on the new rates but he has yet to receive a response from the two.

According to Torres' Nov. 1 letter to the Fund, he said

the insurance carrier has disregarded the mandates of the Public Health Service Act, which provide insurance coverage for adult children up to age 26, rescissions, and prohibition of lifetime limits.

Torres said that since Villagomez was part of the parties that negotiated the contract with

Aetna, "it is imperative that this issue be placed on the agenda for resolution."

"The high costs of medical services especially with serious conditions such as cancer, heart, and other diseases place families under grave financial

predicament. The lifetime limit of \$1 million for patients with these conditions is inadequate," Torres stated in his letter, adding that the Public Health Service Act has restricted lifetime limits such as this.

Torres said that several of his constituents are in this predicament and have sought his help

on this matter. Some of these constituents have even moved to the U.S. mainland to seek better medical services, he added.

Igisomar told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that Torres' concerns have already been considered and are in fact incorporated in the new rate options approved

See **LAWMAKER** on Next Page

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Judge recuses self from lawsuit vs Fitial over casino bill

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

Superior Court associate judge Kenneth L. Govendo recused himself yesterday from presiding over a lawsuit filed by Rep. Joseph Palacios (R-Saipan) against Gov. Benigno R. Fitial for vetoing a local Saipan casino bill.

Govendo told the parties in the case that he is currently handling the NMI Retirement Fund's lawsuit against the Fitial administration. Under the vetoed casino bill, a portion of the revenue will be allocated to the Fund. Govendo said that he has been very vocal against casinos on Saipan.

Govendo said he will refer the case to Superior Court presiding judge Robert C. Naraja, who will choose which other judges will preside over the case.

Palacios told *Saipan Tribune* that he was ready to argue the case by himself but then Govendo announced his decision to recuse. Palacios said he tried to convince Govendo to hear the case as he trusts Govendo's judgment and that he is fair and impartial.

LAWMAKER

From Page 2

by the Fitial administration. He apologized for not immediately responding to Torres and assured that a letter indicating the same will be sent soon.

The Department of Commerce, headed by Igisomar, approved Aetna Global's rate hike proposals early this month, boosting members' premium payments from 8 to 18 percent.

This decision was made after being informed by the Department of Health and Human Services (which was earlier asked to review Aetna's options pursuant to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) that Aetna is classified as a large group plan and is not subject to

Palacios said that assistant attorney general Michael Stanker, counsel for Fitial, agreed with him that the judge should not recuse himself.

"I was hoping to resolve this issue and move on. For me, it's a win-win situation," the lawmaker said.

Palacios, as chairman of the Saipan and Northern Islands Local Delegation's Committee on Judicial and Governmental Operations, filed a petition in October seeking declaratory relief that HLB 17-44, as enacted by the delegation, be declared as a Commonwealth law.

Palacios said he is not questioning the veto, but it is just the language that Fitial used when he stated that the bill was improperly acted on.

"We find that offensive," Palacios said.

Fitial, through Stanker, asserted that Palacios lacks standing to bring the lawsuit.

In a motion to dismiss the case, Fitial argued that he fully complied with the CNMI Constitution in vetoing the Saipan and Northern Islands Casino

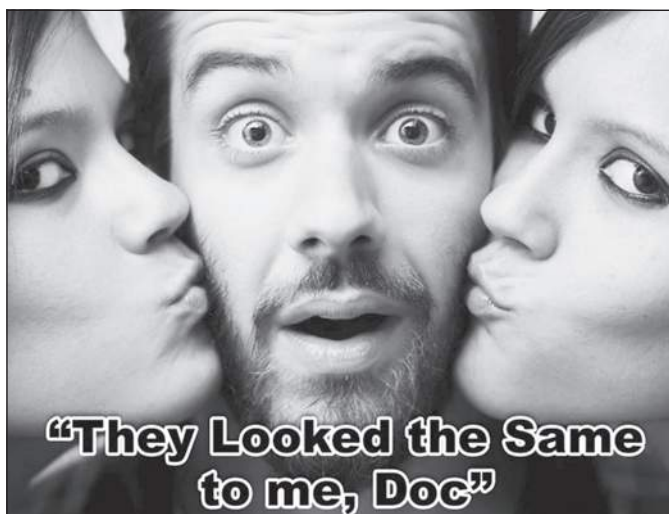
Control Act of 2011.

Stanker said that Palacios lacks standing to challenge the governor's decision because he fails to satisfy any of the three standing factors.

First, Stanker said, Palacios has not experienced a concrete and particularized injury as a result of Fitial vetoing HLB 17-44.

Second, even if the congressman had suffered an injury, which he has not, there is no causation as the governor is entitled to veto a bill for any reason, Stanker said.

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Third, the lawyer said, the veto will not be "redressed by a favorable decision" because the

court cannot pass the law, the requested relief will not place the bill before the governor for ap-

proval, and the governor could still veto the bill even if the court gave a favorable decision.

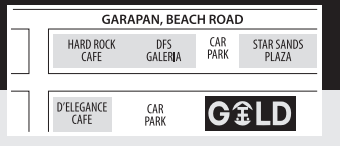
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SENATE

From Page 1

to join the lawsuit against former Fund money manager Merrill Lynch for alleged improper fund management practices. The Fund eventually sued Merrill Lynch.

“We don’t need this law anymore,” Reyes said, in supporting the repealer bill that Senate Vice President Jude Hofschneider (R-Tinian), Sen. Juan Ayuyu (Ind-Rota), and Sen. Henry San Nicolas (Cov-Tinian) authored.

A similar repealer bill is pending in the House.

Sen. Frank Cruz (R-Tinian), the only senator who voted “no” to the repealer yesterday, recommended that the Senate amend instead of repealing the law that was enacted in September.

Sen. Jovita Taimanao (Ind-Rota), chair of a special Senate committee tasked to review Fund bills, abstained from voting, while Sen. Luis Crisostimo (Ind-Saipan) was absent.

The Senate also passed S.B. 17-99, SD1 by a vote of 8-0. This bill, signed by the whole Senate, transfers the administrative functions and liability of the Government Life and Health Insurance Program to the Department of Finance.

3 initiatives passed

Senate President Paul Manglona’s (Ind-Rota) three legislative initiatives to help save the Fund also passed the Senate by a vote of 8-0 each, or more than the three-fourth vote required. If passed by

the House, these initiatives will be presented to voters for ratification.

Senate Legislative Initiative 17-13, SS1, SD1 seeks to amend Article 11 of the NMI Constitution to transfer the disposition and management decision of public land golf course leases to the Fund.

The initiative allows the Fund to lease public land golf courses for up to 99 years—instead of only up to 55 years—for \$50 million or for an amount determined by two certified independent appraisals, whichever is greater.

Reyes offered a floor amendment that ensures the amount that the Fund received is repaid under “reasonable terms and conditions” by the CNMI government to the Marianas Public Land Trust after the employer contributions are paid in full and all unfunded liabilities of the CNMI government for the Defined Benefit Plan retirement system are satisfied. The Senate adopted Reyes’ amendment.

Under the initiative, the Department of Public Lands shall transfer all money from public land golf course leases to the Fund until the government employer contribution is paid in full and all unfunded liabilities for the DB Program pensions are satisfied.

Upon the Fund’s approval, DPL is supposed to execute a 99-year lease pursuant to the terms that the Fund determines. DPL also shall not transfer an interest in any public land golf course without the approval of the Legislature in a joint session.

If this initiative passes and is approved by voters, DPL will hold fee

simple title to all existing public land golf course leases.

These are the Coral Ocean Point Golf Course, Laolao Bay Golf Resort, Rota Resort Golf Course, Marianas Country Club Golf Course, and all other golf courses to which a current land lease is in effect with the CNMI government.

Senators also passed SLI 17-14, SD1, seeking to amend Article 11 of the NMI Constitution to provide for the transfer of funds from MPLT to the Fund.

This involves the use of the interest on the amount received for the lease of property at Tanapag Harbor for the development and maintenance of a memorial park. This proposed constitutional amendment shall apply beginning on the fiscal year after the loan to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is paid in full.

The Senate also passed SLI 17-15, SD1, seeking an amendment to Section 9(a) of Article 3 of the NMI Constitution to set aside 25 percent of the revenues to pay the government’s employer contribution to the Fund.

Fund administrator Richard Villagomez and counsel Carolyn Kern, during the Senate session, said the Fund supports this initiative if the 25 percent is on top of the actuarially determined employer contribution to the Fund.

Contribution withdrawal

While the Senate’s morning session ran until around 3pm without lunch break, senators didn’t vote on House Speaker Eli Cabrera’s (R-Saipan) House Bill 17-226, HD1 as substituted by the Sen-

may plan accordingly.

Sablan was also directed to provide Ada a written report on the details of the completion of these directives by Jan. 6.

Investigation will continue for certified personnel

Ada said the board will continue its investigation in the case of certified PSS employees who have also cashed out their annual leaves.

“As to the procedures for annual leave regarding certified employees, the BOE is still reviewing this situation and will provide further guidance as soon as determinations as to the proper course of action are made,” said Ada.

She admitted that there remains the question of which PSS employees are responsible for the improper expenditure of PSS funds in this instance and to what extent they should be disciplined.

“Due both to the lack of specific information provided to the BOE and to the complex and sensitive nature of this analysis, the BOE has not, as of yet, made any determinations of the proper course of action. However, in the following weeks, the BOE will continue its investigation into these matters,” Ada told Sablan, adding that the board expects Sablan’s full, candid, and complete cooperation in the investigation.

PSS employees who were randomly interviewed yesterday on condition of anonymity were pleased to learn of the board’s action on what they labeled as a serious issue that has demoralized many employees.

“We’re very pleased and happy that the board took action immediately. However, we are still looking forward to the board making a determination also for the certified personnel of the system who allegedly cashed out their annual leaves,” one of them said yesterday.

ate because of concerns on the Senate amendments.

However, the Senate entertained yesterday public comments on the bill, which would be the first bill to be acted on by senators when the session convenes this morning.

The original bill seeks to allow certain non-retired Fund members to withdraw their contributions from the pension agency without being required to resign from their job or being penalized.

The Senate’s proposed amendment would not allow these non-retired members to get their money but instead allow them to “roll over” their contributions to the Defined Contribution Plan.

Joe Pangelinan, representing active members of the Fund who support the original HB 17-226, said that a compromise would be to allow non-retired Fund members to withdraw 50 percent of their contributions and not 100 percent so as to help the pension agency stay afloat.

Manglona, in an interview, said this will be one of the proposals that a special Senate committee and Fund officials will be discussing prior to the start of today’s session.

He also pointed out that the Senate’s proposed amendment also authorizes “hardship loans” in which a member may borrow up to 50 percent of his or her contribution.

The Senate amendment also allows a rebate offset amount to provide an alternative funding mechanism to pay for the rollovers. This provision is taken from a similar proposal from House

minority leader Joseph Deleon Guerrero (R-Saipan).

Pangelinan said it’s a fact—and not a “scare” tactic—that the Fund’s lifespan is only a few years so active members should be allowed to withdraw their contributions.

“Fear is real, and we’re feeling it,” he added.

Guadalupe Borja Robinson, a retiree who went back to service, also asked the Senate to allow active members to withdraw their contributions.

“I want to be optimistic but let’s be realistic,” she said, adding that the government cannot even pay tax rebates.

Marja Lee Taitano, however, was the only one who voiced concern about the negative impact on the Fund of allowing active members to withdraw, saying it will hasten the demise of the pension agency.

Another member of the public said retirees have already enjoyed their pensions, but those who are still active members may not be able to benefit from their contributions when they retire so they want to withdraw their contributions now.

Reyes said in his 20 years as a member of the Legislature, he has not seen the Legislature approve funding to retire the Fund’s unfunded liability.

“We have not done enough to address the crisis facing the Retirement Fund,” he added.

The Senate floor leader said he recommends that a separate initiative be introduced to compel the government to retire the Fund’s unfunded liability.

SOME

From Page 1

was earlier alleged that Sablan herself, along with five other central office employees, had cashed out their annual leaves this year. The board’s decision yesterday, however, covered only non-certified personnel while it continues to look into similar actions among certified personnel.

“First, the BOE has determined that there have been cash out payments of annual leave to non-certified employees of PSS that violate BOE regulation... To ensure that there are no further violations of this regulation, the BOE directs you to immediately cease any cash payments for accrued annual leave to any non-certified employees of the PSS that are not accompanied by a concurrent ‘separation’ from PSS,” Ada told Sablan, adding that, as the regulation states, “separation” means a break from employment with the PSS for at least six consecutive months.

If there are future instances where the commissioner feels a waiver of this requirement is justified, Ada said that no checks can be issued until Sablan grants a waiver to the separation requirement in writing. The commissioner also needs to bring this waiver before the full board for action—to either concur or decline the waiver.

Sablan’s office issued a “no comment” response yesterday when sought for comments.

Ada also instructed Sablan yesterday to contact any non-certified employees who have been paid their annual leave without separation from PSS to inform them about this violation of policy.

The board is giving these employing four options on how to repay or return the money.

First, the employee may elect to repay the entire amount within 30 days.

Second, the employee may elect to agree to the elimination from their balance of accrued annual leave an amount that corresponds to the funds expended. Third, the employee may elect to repay PSS with a combination of the first two options. Fourth, the employee may leave PSS, without delay, for at least six months.

Affected employees have until Jan. 6, 2012, to make their choices. If they refuse to make a choice, the board may take further steps, both administrative and legal, to have these monies returned to PSS.

Ada said she expects Sablan to submit a report no later than Jan. 9, 2012. This report will include the names of each PSS employee identified to have been provided an improper payout and the choice that each of these employees has made to compensate PSS.

Ada clarified with Sablan that the measures are not punitive in nature “because it seems these payments were made with the commissioner’s permission and blessing.” These steps, Ada said, are intended solely to return to PSS funds that were improperly expended.

Begin automatic conversion

Ada said the board expects Sablan to properly enforce from now on the system of annual leave pertaining to non-certified employees as required by regulation.

To this end, Ada directed Sablan to immediately identify any non-certified employees of PSS who have a balance of annual leave in excess of 360 hours; immediately convert any such excess of annual leave to sick leave pursuant to board regulation; and inform all non-certified employees that, from this point forward, any excess amount of annual leave over 360 hours accrued will be immediately and automatically converted to sick leave so that they

GINGRICH

From Page 1

grich as saying in a 1995 meeting.

It took more than a decade later or in 2008 for a U.S. law to be signed federalizing CNMI immigration and allowing for the election of the CNMI’s first nonvoting delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives.

Abramoff, in his new book, *Capitol Punishment: The Hard Truth about Washington Corruption from America’s Most Notorious Lobbyist*, said that Gingrich’s tendency to wander was a bit unnerving, as he never seemed to be able to sit still or focus for more than a few minutes.

“Finally, when I told him about the Marianas, his response stunned me. He suggested we make the Marianas and other American Pacific territories—Guam and American Samoa—part of Hawaii,” Abramoff said.

Abramoff, whose lobby firms billed the CNMI some \$11 million from 1995 to 2001, had to ask himself whether Gingrich was not listening at all or if he’d said something that led Gingrich to such a conclusion.

“Later on, I’d come to realize this was classic Newt. As soon as he heard an issue, he would quickly decide what to do—even without the benefit of all the information—and that was the end of the discussion. I tried feebly to bring us back to the real issues at hand, but he was not having any of it,” he said.

Though the meeting with Gingrich was something of a disaster, Abramoff said he would soon learn that Gingrich had little to do with the movement of the legislation through the House.

“That was Tom [DeLay] and Dick Armey, the majority leader of Congress,” he said.

Abramoff said at the time they had put an effective block in place to stop federalization legislation, “which

would have hurt the CNMI.”

His 303-page book contains several pages and passages about his and his firms’ lobbying on behalf of the CNMI.

From 1995 to 2001, Abramoff was instrumental in blocking the passage of legislation establishing federal authority over the CNMI’s immigration system and raising the local minimum wage. The lobbying ended when Juan N. Babauta became governor in 2002.

Rep. Froilan Tenorio, the first CNMI governor to hire the services of Abramoff in 1995, told *Saipan Tribune* on Monday that if he were still the governor, he’d rather have a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. than a nonvoting delegate in Congress.

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), when asked for comment, said yesterday that Tenorio is no longer the governor and he’s entitled to his own opinion.

Sablan, the first and so far the only nonvoting delegate the CNMI has ever had, said a lobbyist can only do and serve the entity paying him, not like a delegate who has to protect and serve the interests of the CNMI.

“I was able to bring in millions of dollars to the CNMI, and Abramoff was able to get millions of dollars from the CNMI. He’s convicted and he served his time... I hope he came out a better person,” Sablan said.

Just like the former and current governors and other CNMI officials that Abramoff described in his book, Sablan also has yet to read the book but said he watched the movie based on Abramoff’s life.

After serving his prison term for mail fraud and conspiracy, Abramoff was released from prison in June 2010. Over a year later, he released the book.

He started working in 1994 for Preston Gates, where he built one of the nation’s most prestigious and profitable lobbying practices.

Fund's opportunity losses increasing due to delay of repealer

By **MONETH G. DEPOSA**
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REPORTER

The delay in the enactment of the bill that would repeal the Beneficiaries Derivative Act is causing the NMI Retirement Fund's opportunity losses to go higher as a result of its continued absence from the international investment market.

Pursuant to law, the Fund is not authorized to invest its assets and portfolio without the advice of an investment expert or consultant.

Although he could not immediately quantify the opportunity loss, board chair Sixto K. Igisomar believes that the impact on the Fund's investment is "significant."

"We have yet to quantify that number. All I can say is, the Fund has lost the opportunity to gain something because we're out of the market," he said.

All of the Fund's money

managers and investment consultants—including Wilshire Associates and Buck Consultants, the agency's financial adviser and actuary—terminated their contracts with the agency soon after the passage of the derivative law in September this year. That law allows retirees to sue these service providers on behalf of the Fund if the board refuses to take such action.

The *en masse* exit of these financial advisers forced the board to liquidate the Fund's assets, put them in mutual funds and eventually have them transferred to the CDARS program, or the certificate of deposit account registry service.

It is the board's intent to put all of its portfolio in the program until a new investment adviser is hired. However, until the derivative law is repealed, no investment consultant wants to transact business with the Fund.

Igisomar estimates that the Fund's current portfolio is valued at \$261 million.

Pleased with Senate passage

Igisomar was pleased to learn that the Senate passed yesterday the repealer bill, which now goes to the House for action.

He is optimistic that the Fitial administration will stand by its promise to pass the measure.

Pending the actual signing of the repealer bill into law, he said the Fund will continue to adver-

tise its need for an investment consultant and actuary.

Igisomar also lauded the Senate's passage of a measure that will allow the adjustment of Group Health Life Insurance rate based on available government resources, as well as the

transfer of the health insurance program from the Fund to the Commerce Department.

Igisomar said the Fund also wants the Workers Compensation Commission to be transferred to other government agencies so that the Fund can focus all its efforts on how to save the struggling pension program.

Owner of defunct Plumeria hotel seeks release of \$224K

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

The owner of the defunct Plumeria Resort in San Roque is asking the Superior Court to immediately release to them the \$224,194 that one of the hotel's owners had posted with the court in 2007 to hold off a court judgment against him.

Saipan Achugao Resort Members' Association or SARMA, owner of Plumeria Resort, said the immediate release of the money is several years overdue and that it is urgently needed in order to reopen the hotel.

In a motion filed in court, SARMA counsel Sean E. Frink said that Wan Jin Yoon's appeal was unsuccessful so the judgment against him stands. SARMA is entitled to the money, he added.

The motion will be heard before Superior Court associate judge David A. Wiseman on Jan. 19, 2012.

SARMA was formed in 2000 as a non-profit corporation. It is composed of members who own subleased interest in units or commercial spaces at the Plu-

meria Resort.

Plumeria Resort was built in 1990 by Saipan Joint Venture, which assigned the ground lease to SARMA in 2000.

SARMA sued one of its members, Yoon, for alleged non-payment of management fees and maintenance fees. Yoon filed a counter lawsuit against SARMA for the alleged forced sale of his unit.

In May 2006, Wiseman ruled that SARMA's forced sale of Yoon's unit was improper because Yoon was not in default of either lease or SARMA's by-law provisions at the time of the forced sale. Wiseman, however, determined that Yoon is subject to dues assessments and emergency repair fees from March 7, 2003, "to the present." In November 2006, Wiseman ordered Yoon to remit \$224,194 to SARMA.

Yoon appealed to the CNMI Supreme Court and requested a stay of judgment.

In March 2007, Wiseman stayed the appeal on the condition that Yoon submits to the court a bond in the amount of the judgment, plus 10 percent of

the judgment to cover interest, plus \$250 to cover costs.

On April 2, 2007, the CNMI Court accounting officer received a cashier's check in the amount of \$246,863.40 from Yoon.

In SARMA's motion to release the money, Frink cited that in October 2011, the CNMI Supreme Court affirmed SARMA's \$224,194 judgment against Yoon.

Frink said that Yoon's placement of the \$246,863.40 with the court was security intended by the court and the parties to guarantee payment to SARMA should Yoon lose his appeal.

Frink said the Supreme Court's order and judgment made clear the judgment against Yoon ordered by the Superior Court in favor of SARMA was correct.

'Central site for all permitting agencies would help island's property developers'

By **CLARISSA V. DAVID**
clarissa_david@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Michael S. Sablan of Blue Water Homes LLC is suggesting that all permitting agencies should be centralized in one location for the convenience of property developers applying for permits and licenses on island.

Sablan said that he will support any efforts to streamline and coordinate permitting requirements for property developers.

"I think for developers, it'd be very convenient if they came and dealt with the agencies in one place," Sablan told *Saipan Tribune*.

Sablan, who is also a member of Sandy Beach Homes LLC, which recently held its grand opening for the first affordable housing project in the CNMI under the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, disclosed that a "frustration" they had for the Sandy Beach Homes project was the different locations of permitting agencies like the Department of Public Works and the Division of Environmental Quality.

"They were all spread out," according to Sablan.

Sablan, a former public auditor, noted that cost is a big issue why centralizing these permitting agencies remains to be seen.

"If we're unable to move the agencies together because of fiscal issues, I think one alternative is for developers to come into one office and have the agencies meet them there rather than moving the entire agency and have permitting meetings at one location," he suggested.

Sablan disclosed that they were able to do this for the Sandy Beach Homes project in Chalan Kanoa, conducting multi-agency meetings at the Coastal Resources Management office along Middle Road or at the Zoning Office in Dandan. "That worked out well," he added.

Sablan is optimistic that with the Blue Water Homes project, which is set to begin construction in the next few months, will see improvements on these "deficiencies," including redundancies in regulations and requirements.

The Blue Water Homes project is expected to be completed in 2013.



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Fall semester ends with SHEFA grants for scholars still pending

By **MONETH G. DEPOSA**
moneth_deposa@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Off-island and on-island scholars are worried that they may not be able to continue their studies next semester due to the government's continued failure to issue them their financial assistance.

Saipan Higher Education Financial Assistance administrator Henry Hofschneider disclosed yesterday that no checks have been disbursed to their scholars since August due to the government's cash flow problem.

With the fall 2011 semester just ending in many universities and colleges, students are now required to enroll for the next semester's course—which is being hampered by the delayed checks from the Commonwealth, he said.

Hofschneider said that students are pleading and begging for the release of their checks because they want to use it for enrollment and to settle outstanding bills.

He said they have no choice but to explain to scholars the government's shaky financial situation. Checks for SHEFA scholars are sourced from poker fees and license fees collected by the government. Many poker machines did not renew their licenses in the past three months, he said, affecting the government's collection for scholarship programs.

The Department of Finance

last disbursed checks to SHEFA scholars in August 2011, amounting to \$148,000.

Hofschneider said that he received information from Treasury that the available amount for scholarship is not enough. "I was informed that Treasury

has only 24 percent [of what we requested for disbursement] available now for our scholars, which will only cover a few students," he said. This amount may be disbursed based on a priority list.

Records show that close to \$1

million in financial grants have yet to be disbursed to SHEFA scholars for three academic terms.

For the fall 2010 semester, 16 checks are still pending totaling to \$75,200 for Framingham State University students. SHEFA also returned four checks

worth \$5,600 to Treasury due to some errors.

For the spring 2011 semester, 12 checks have yet to be disbursed, totaling \$13,400.

This fall 2011 term, 512 students are still waiting for their checks. Total pending awards

for this period is \$852,000.

Overall, SHEFA still has \$946,200 in pending financial checks for its scholars here and off-island.

Each fiscal year, the Legislature appropriates \$3 million for SHEFA programs.

NMHC seeks inclusion of entire NMI in USDA lending program

By **CLARISSA V. DAVID**
clarissa_david@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Housing Corp. is seeking the inclusion of the entire CNMI in the implementation of the Substantially Underserved Trust Area provisions by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service.

Corporate director Joshua T. Sasamoto reported during yesterday's board meeting that they included this in the comments they submitted to USDA before the Dec. 13 deadline.

The Rural Utilities Service or RUS, a Rural Development policy, planning and lending agency of the USDA, leads the implementation of the Substantially Underserved Trust Areas or SUTA provisions that give the agency new tools to finance improvements in electric, telecommunications, water, and sewer infrastructure in underserved tribal communities.

RUS issued on Oct. 14 a proposed rule affecting RUS



Corporate director Joshua Sasamoto of the Northern Marianas Housing Corp., standing, gestures as he reports to the board regarding the comments they submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture seeking the inclusion of the entire CNMI in the Substantially Underserved Trust Areas or SUTA provisions during yesterday's board meeting.

loans and grants to construct, acquire, or improve utility infrastructure among SUTA, which aims to implement Section 906F of the Rural Electrification Act by providing a process for eligible applicants to request SUTA consideration.

"Implementation of the

SUTA provision is critical to USDA's broader efforts to make all programs more accessible to tribal governments and communities, residents of Hawaiian homelands, Alaskan Natives, and Pacific Islanders," the USDA RD website stated.

Sasamoto disclosed that the

NMHC sought comments from Gov. Benigno R. Fitial regarding this proposed rule but did not hear back from him.

"Just to be safe, we went ahead and submitted our own comments," said Sasamoto, adding that the comment period was extended to Jan. 17.

According to Sasamoto, the entire CNMI should be designated as SUTA eligible given that USDA RD already classified Tinian and Rota as underserved communities.

"We're saying that Saipan also is underserved," Sasamoto stressed.

CNMI GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES 2012 Health Insurance Rates

**No Rate Increase
for 2012**



New Silver Plus Option
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DEADLINE EXTENDED 'TILL DECEMBER 30TH

CLASS	ACTIVE GOVT	MEDICAL (Bi-weekly)	MED & DENTAL (Bi-weekly)
Single	STAYWELL	\$65.00	\$91.00
	Aetna High Option	\$100.93	No Dental Plan
	Aetna Low Option	\$ 93.97	No Dental Plan
	StayWell Annual savings = \$934 + Potential Refund of \$ 375		
Couple	STAYWELL	\$130.00	\$182.00
	Aetna High Option	\$206.90	No Dental Plan
	Aetna Low Option	\$191.39	No Dental Plan
	StayWell Annual savings = \$1,999 + Potential Refund of \$ 750		
Family	STAYWELL	\$208.00	\$265.00
	Aetna High Option	\$322.96	No Dental Plan
	Aetna Low Option	\$298.78	No Dental Plan
	StayWell Annual savings = \$2,999 + Potential Refund of \$ 1,236		

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Out of Pocket Annual Maximum:
Single = \$ 1,500; Family= \$4,500

*Some conditions apply

AETNA BENEFITS

No Refund Program
Common Law Spouses Covered at Higher Rates
70 – 80% coverage for off-island inpatient care

Out of Pocket Annual Maximums:
High Option: Single = \$ 4,000; family = \$ 12,000
Low Option: Single = \$ 10,000; family = \$ 30,000

Pacific study looks at the role of schools in preventing obesity

HONOLULU, Hawaii—Obesity is a rising epidemic among school-aged children in the Pacific region, according to the World Health Organization. Seven of the 10 most overweight countries in the world are Pacific island nations, and

children in these nation-states are at increased risk for developing Type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases.

A recent study released by the Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific, or REL Pacific, evaluated health education pro-

grams in seven jurisdictions: Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, and Yap), and Palau.

The study, Nutrition and Physical Education Policy and Practice in Pacific Region Secondary Schools, was prepared by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. It identifies the percentage of secondary schools that are taking measures to prevent childhood obesity in these regions by promoting student wellness, physical education, food service, and nutri-

tion education.

The study addresses the need for more data on this growing epidemic, collecting statistics from state education agency websites and published reports; legislative documents; and country reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office.

Childhood obesity is often attributed to decreases in physical activity, increases in food portion sizes, and the availability of drinks and foods with high levels of saturated fats and sugar.

The study discovered that important strides are being made throughout the Pacific region to promote student wellness, physical education, and nutrition education.

Many secondary schools have limited student access to snacks with high sugar or salt content, and provided courses covering nutrition, dietary behavior, and physical education in their curricula. Six out of seven jurisdictions have physical education standards, while five jurisdictions have student wellness and food policies.

There are areas for improvement. Hawaii is the only jurisdiction with a health advisory council, and fewer than half the jurisdictions provide nutrient content for school meals, or require physical education

in every grade.

The study suggests state education agencies can do more by establishing school health councils; increasing prohibitions on advertising of candy, fast food, and soda in schools; including more nutrition and food service staff on school health councils; increasing principals' access to student wellness policies; and integrating families and communities.

Federal and state health education programs are one of the primary means of reaching children about fitness and nutrition. Reducing childhood obesity levels through physical education and nutrition programs in secondary schools will promote healthier children and healthier communities throughout the Pacific. **(PREL)**

Two confirmed to MVA board

By **HAIDEE V. EUGENIO**
haidee_eugenio@gmail.com
REPORTER

The Senate confirmed yesterday the governor's appointments of former Tinian mayor James M. Mendiola and LaoLao Bay Golf Resort president Kwang Joong Kim to serve on the Marianas Visitors Authority's board of directors.

Senators confirmed the nominees by adopting the reports of the Senate Committee on Executive Appointments and Governmental Investigations recommending their confirmation.

Kim represents Saipan, while Mendiola represents Tinian on the MVA board. They were at the Senate session yesterday morning.

Sen. Frank Cruz (R-Tinian), chair of the EAGI Committee, said he's glad that all the eight senators present supported the nominees' confirmation.

"Mr. Mendiola was Tinian mayor and a former congressman so he knows how to help revive the economy while Mr.

Kim has very good credentials and knows how to promote the CNMI to tourists and investors," he said.

Kim earlier said that the CNMI needs to improve its tourism infrastructure, including upgrading hotels and building five-star hotels that target high-end tourist markets.

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial submitted Mendiola's name to the Senate on Oct. 6, and Kim's on Nov. 2.

"After much deliberation and based on our overall assessment of [Mr. Mendiola's and Mr. Kim's] credentials, experiences, testimonials and all other relevant issues considered, we are convinced beyond reasonable doubt that [Mr. Mendiola and Mr. Kim] possess the necessary qualification and leadership skills necessary to serve as a member of the Marianas Visitors Authority," the EAGI panel said in recommending the full Senate confirmation on the appointment of the two.



Manglona denies bid to enforce settlement accord with lawyer

The U.S. District Court for the NMI yesterday issued an order denying an investor's motion to enforce his settlement agreement with attorney Ramon K. Quichocho and landowner Joaquin Q. Atalig.

Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona denied Sin Ho Nam's motion to enforce settlement due to lack of jurisdiction.

Manglona said a court has jurisdiction to enforce a settlement agreement only if it expressly retained such jurisdiction or otherwise embodied the settlement contract in the dismissal order.

The judge pointed out that the stipulated "order dismissing case" is silent on jurisdiction and does not mention the settlement agreement.

During oral argument on Thursday, Nam, through counsel Colin Thompson, suggested that it was the intention of the parties and the settlement judge that the district court retain jurisdiction to enforce the settlement.

But Manglona said even if this were so, the failure to express that intention in the dismissal order would be fatal to jurisdiction.

"Even a district court's expressed intention to retain jurisdiction is insufficient to confer jurisdiction if that in-

tention is not expressed in the order of dismissal," said the judge, citing a previous ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Nam sued Quichocho and Atalig for breaching a land lease agreement when they terminated a 55-year lease less than two years later despite having already paid \$218,000.

U.S. District Court for the NMI visiting judge Mark W. Bennett found Quichocho and Atalig liable to Nam for breach of contract.

Bennett in his order stated that Nam's remedies or question of damages and the entirety of his claim against Quichocho will proceed to trial.

On Sept. 12, 2011, Thompson and attorney Michael Dotts, counsel for Nam and Quichocho respectively, asked the court to dismiss all claims and counterclaims as they have reached a settlement. The terms of the settlement were not disclosed.

On Oct. 18, 2011, Manglona dismissed the lawsuit following the parties' agreement.

On Nov. 15, 2011, Nam, through Thompson, requested the court to enforce their settlement agreement. **(Ferdie de la Torre)**



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Spring 2012 Semester Dates

Registration
January 10 to 13, 2012

Student Orientation for International Students
January 6, 2012
9:30am to 4:00pm
Student Center, Building J

Student Orientation
January 12, 2012
1st Session: 9am to 12pm
2nd Session: 4pm to 7pm
NMC Library, Building O

Late Registration
January 17 to 20, 2012

First Day for Spring Classes
January 17, 2012

English Placement Test
(Held in the English Lab, Bldg. M):
Jan 3 (Tue) 9am-4pm Jan 9 (Mon) 9am-4pm
Jan 4 (Wed) 9am-6pm Jan 10 (Tue) 9am-6pm
Jan 5 (Thu) 9am-6pm Jan 11 (Wed) 9am-6pm
Jan 6 (Fri) 9am-2pm Jan 12 (Thu) 9am-4pm
Jan 13 (Fri) 9am-2pm

(Appointments recommended, please call the Languages & Humanities Dept. at 234-5498 ext. 2017/2009)

Math Placement Tests
(Held in Bldg. A, Room 9):
Jan 3 (Tue) 10am-12pm Jan 10 (Tue) 10am-12pm
Jan 5 (Thu) 10am-12pm Jan 12 (Thu) 10am-12pm
or 5pm-7pm or 5pm-7pm

For more information, log on to www.nmcnet.edu or contact the Office of Admissions and Records at 234-5498 ext. 1528. For the latest news and announcements, follow NMC on Facebook: www.facebook.com/NMC.Proa

Commonwealth I Sankattan Siha Na Islas Mariana
Ofisinan I Gubietno
Dipáltamenton I Tano’ Pupbliku

NOTICE OF PROPOSED LEASE OF PUBLIC LAND

In accordance with Section 106 (b) of Public Law 15-2, the Department of Public Lands hereby gives notice of its intent to lease certain public lands in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Any interested parties of the general public may submit comments, data, views, or arguments of alternative proposals for the lease of the public land. As further provided by Public Law 15-2, the following pertinent information is required to be published.

- i. The proposed lease of public land is described as Lot No. 047 L 02, containing an area of approximately 49,000 square meters, more or less, situated in Naftan, Saipan. A copy of the location of the parcel is available at the Department of Public Lands for inspection.
- ii. The prospective lessee is Eco Island Development, LLC. The Members of the Limited Liability Company are Mr. Herman P. Sablan and Ms. Shen Yen.
- iii. The proposed lease was negotiated by Mr. Herman P. Sablan.
- iv. The lessee shall use the premises solely for the purpose of developing and managing a solar photovoltaic power plant.

The term of the proposed lease agreement is 25 years, with an option to extend the lease for an additional 15 years.

The proposed annual rental during the term is based on a percentage of the appraised fair market value of the property.
- v. A copy of the proposed lease agreement may be obtained at the office of the Department of Public Lands, located on the 2nd floor of the Joeten Dandan Commercial Building in Dandan, Saipan; Songsong Village, Rota; or the 1st floor of the Kings Commercial Building, Tinian.
- vi. The Department of Public Lands has received no alternative proposals to lease the subject public land in Naftan, Saipan.
- vii. The Secretary of the Department of Public Lands shall accept written comments, views, arguments or alternative proposals from interested parties on or before January 5, 2012 at the Department of Public Lands offices located in Saipan, Rota or Tinian.

NUTISIA PUT MAPROPONIN INEKSTENDIN INATKILON TANU' PUPBLIKU

Sigun gi Seksiona 106(b) gi Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i Dipattamentun Tānu’ Pupbliku guini ha nā’i nutisia ni intension-ña para u mana’ma’atkila pumalu na tānu’ pupbliku siha giya Saipan, Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Marianas siha. Maseha hāyi na pattida siha gi halum i pupbliku henerát siña ha na’hálum i imfotmasion, opiñon, pat testamoñun kinentra siha gi tinahguin propositu siha ni para i atkilon tānu’ pupbliku. Sigi mās mo’na mapribeniya ginin i Lain Pupbliku 15-2, i tinattitiyi pettanesin imfotmasion ni madimānda ni debi na u mapupblika.

- i. I maproponi na atkilon tānu’ pupbliku ha diskribi kumu Lot No. Lot No. 047 L 02, ni kinonsisti āria kāsī guaaha 49,000 square meters, mās pat menus, ni gaigi giya Naftan, Saipan. I kopian i lugát gaigi gi pumalu na gumuaha gi Dipattamentun Tānu’ Pupbliku siha ni para i rikunosimientu.
- ii. I manatikikila i Eco Island Development, LCC. I miembru siha gi Liability Company si Siñot Herman P. Sablan yan si Siñora Shen Yen.
- iii. I maproponi na atkilon manigosiu gi as Siñot Herman P. Sablan.
- iv. I manatikikila debi na u kuntuha umusa i lugát siha uniku para i hinangai adilāntu yan minanehan solar photovoltaic power plant.

I teman i maproponi na kuntrátan atkilon sa’ 25 āñus, yan option para u ma’ekstendi i atkilon gi ta’lu 15 āñus.

I maproponi na āpas atkilon gi sakkan gi durāntin i tema sigun gi percentage gi appraised fair market value gi propiedát.
- v. Kopian i manmaproponi na kontrátan atkilon siña machuli’ gi ufisinan i Dipattamentun Tānu’ Pupbliku siha, gaigi gi sigundu bibienda 2nd floor gi Joeten Dandan Commercial Building giya Dandan, Saipan; gi Songsong Village, Luta; pat i primet 1st bibienda gi Kings Commercial Building, Tinian.
- vi. I Dipattamentun Tanu’ Pupbliku siha tāya’ na ha risibi tinahguin propositu siha para sinuhetun atkilon tanu’ pupbliku siha giya Naftan, Saipan.
- vii. I Sekritāriun i Dipattamentun Tanu’ Pupbliku siha debi na u aksepta i tinigi’ i imfotmasion, opiñon yan testamoñun kinentra pat tinahguin propositu siha ginin i manggai interes na pattida siha gi pat āntis di Ineru (January) 5, 2012 gi ufisinan Dipattamentun Tānu’ Pupbliku siha ni gaigi Saipan, Luta, pat Tinian.

ARONGORONG REEL POMWOL AKKILONUL FALÚWEER TOULAP

Sángi Tálil ye 106(b) mellól Alléghul Toulap 15-2, Bwulasiyool Ammwelil Falúweer Toulap, ekke atotoowow ammataf igha ebwe akkilaaló eghús falúw mellól Seipel, Commonwealth Téel Falúwasch Marianas. Schóókka remuschál emwal rebwe isisilong yaar mángemáng , data awewee, me angíngi reel pomwol akkilonul falúweer toulap. Sengi Alléghul Toulap ye 15-2, ewwal ayoora, lamal awewee kka rebwe mweiti ngáli milikka ebwe akkatééló.

- i. Pomwol akkilonul falúweer toulap nge ekke bwaári Lot No. 047 L 02 ebwe yoor faaigh me tiwoow saangaras lapal (49,000 square meters) elapeló me ngáre eghús, elo Naftan, Seipel. Tilighial bwuley yeel nge eyoor mereel Bwulasiyool Falúweer Toulap (Public Lands) ngáre óubwe ghuley fischiy.
- ii. Schéschéél schóól akkilón nge Eco Islands Development, LLC. Membrol Limited Liability Company yeel nge Mr. Herman P. Sablan me Ms. Shen Yen.
- iii. Schóól aweweey akkilon yel nge Mr. Herman P. Sablan.
- iv. Schóól akkilon ebwe yááyá falúw yeel rel ebwe ayoora me mwóghutagheli solar photovoltaic power plant.

Tool aighúghúl pomwol akkilon nge reweigh me limoow ráágh (25 years). Emmwel rebwe bwal sóóbwey ngáli seigh me limoow ráágh (15 years).

Pomwol méél akkilon lól ráágh kka re akkilali nge ebwe mwiril sángi percentage il yaal appraised fair market value il falúw.

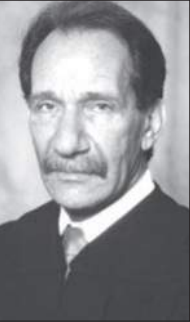
Tilighial akkilon yeel nge emmwel óubwe bwughi merel bwulasiyool Ammwelil Falúweer Toulap, elo aruwowal pwó (2nd floor) me Joeten Dandan Commercial Building llól Tuturam, Seipél; Songsong village, Luuta; me ngáre mmwal pwó (1st floor) mellól Kings Commercial Building, Tchúlúyól.
- v. Bwulasiyool Ammwelil Falúweer Toulap nge esáál bweibwogh mwo pomwol akkilon ye elo Naftan, Seipél.
- vi. Samwoolul Bwulasiyool Ammwelil Falúweer Toulap nge ebwe bwughi ischil mángemáng, aingiingil merel amweyút mmwal Eneero (January) 5, 2012 mellól Bwulasiyool Ammwelil Falúweer Toulap iye elo Seipél, Luuta, Tchúlúyól.

Ex-convict gets two years for stealing wallet at golf school

An ex-convict who was caught on surveillance camera stealing a wallet from an employee at the J&P Golf Academy in Gualo Rai pleaded guilty yesterday and was sentenced to two years in prison.

Jack Ngiraibuuch, 36, pleaded guilty to theft as part of a plea deal. In consideration of his guilty plea, the Office of the Attorney General agreed not to seek the revocation of his probation in connection with a conviction over a 2008 theft by deception case.

Superior Court associate judge David A. Wiseman gave Ngiraibuuch credit for the time



Wiseman

he has already served in jail and ordered him to start serving his sentence on Jan. 11, 2012. Ngiraibuuch was also required to pay a \$500 fine but allowed him to pay only \$250 if he pays within a year of his release. He was also ordered to pay restitution to the victim.

Ngiraibuuch stole the victim’s wallet on Aug. 30, 2011. The wallet contained \$704 in cash and \$5,250 in checks. A surveillance camera at the academy captured Ngiraibuuch using a telephone in the booth then taking the wallet from the victim’s purse.

One of the responding police officers identified the suspect through the surveillance camera.

According to the victim, the suspect arrived at the establishment at 8:08am that day and asked to use the telephone to call his family. Ngiraibuuch told the victim that his family members were supposed to meet him to play golf.

Ngiraibuuch used the phone in the booth twice, then informed the victim he would wait outside for his family to arrive.

When the victim checked her purse later, she realized that her wallet was gone. When the victim reviewed the surveillance footage that same morning, she saw the suspect touching her bag.

In February 2009, Ngiraibuuch pleaded guilty to theft by deception after buying items using a stolen check in the amount of \$500 at Ming Li Store on June 13, 2008. He was sentenced to 10 days in prison and then placed on probation.

Ngiraibuuch has two pending traffic cases. *(Ferdie de la Torre)*

Flashback
A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS’ HEADLINES

Dec. 28, 1999

Governor wants power project delay resolved

Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio yesterday sought the speedy resolution of the dispute over the stalled \$120 million power project designed to increase the energy capacity of the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation in order to avert severe power outages. Describing the power situation as critical, the governor pressed officials of the utilities company to meet with the Attorney General’s Office to find ways how the power expansion project could proceed expeditiously. According to Tenorio, he is worried that failure to build the new power plant, whose construction had been initially scheduled to begin late last year, could cripple power supply on the main island of Saipan.

Tinian lawmakers pledge \$3.5M for airport project

The Tinian Legislative Delegation yesterday pledged some \$3.5 million funding to expand the existing runway at the West Tinian Airport in a move to save the financially troubled Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino. In a meeting with the Commonwealth Ports Authority officials, the Tinian Delegation noted that the Federal Aviation Administration’s funding did not cover the airport’s full expansion program which is estimated to cost \$24 million. Tinian Dynasty has blamed the failure of the CNMI government to carry out its commitment to expand the West Tinian Airport runway as the main stumbling block in increasing visitor arrivals on the island.

Dec. 28, 2001

SGMA seeks passage of anti-double taxation bill

The Saipan Garments Manufacturers Association has thrown its considerable weight behind the bill that would eliminate double taxation on businesses, saying the measure safeguards the CNMI government’s original guarantees to the apparel sector. In a letter to Gov. Pedro P. Tenorio, SGMA Executive Director Richard Pierce reiterated the group’s support for House Bill 12-391-both for its intent and for the legislation itself. “We strongly encourage you to sign House Bill 12-391. This protects original commitments and representations made in the mid-1980’s to the apparel sector, as well as safeguarding existing revenue sources,” Pierce said.

US Labor sues 2 Saipan firms

U.S. Labor Secretary Elaine L. Chao has filed before the U.S. District Court a civil complaint versus two San Antonio-based firms on allegations that the business entities, under a joint venture capacity, failed to compensate 15 employees the overtime pay due them. U.S. Labor, through its trial attorney Barbara A. Matthews, is seeking to collect from New Saipan Development Inc., Royal Crown Insurance Corp. and two of its executives, Cheong Pui Ng and Kang Ho Yu, back wages and liquidated damages. In the event that the court does not award judgment for liquidated damages, the plaintiff expressed willingness to settle for an alternative: The recovery of judgment restraining the defendants from withholding payment of unpaid overtime compensation, in addition to pre-judgment interest.

Dec. 28, 2002

Agreement requires CUC to waive 50 percent of gov’t utility bill

The Memorandum of Agreement signed between the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation and the Commonwealth Development Authority requires that the CUC waive 50 percent of the CNMI government’s unpaid utility billings outstanding as of March 31, 2002. “Creditor will waive all accrued interest owed by debtor and, in return, debtor will waive 50 percent of the CNMI government’s unpaid utility billings,” the MOA stated. It further noted that the “Debtor and the CNMI government will negotiate a mutually acceptable payment plan for the remaining 50 percent.”

Tudela re-nominated to CPA board

Gov. Juan N. Babauta has re-nominated Roman Tudela to sit in the Commonwealth Ports Authority Board of Directors, after the Senate Committee on Executive Appointments and Government Investigations failed to act on his confirmation within the 90-day period, which lapsed last Dec. 22, 2002. The Governor re-nominated Tudela to represent Saipan in the CPA Board through a letter to Senate President Paul A. Manglona. If confirmed, Tudela would serve a four-year term. “I am confident that Mr. Tudela is qualified and will be a valuable asset on this vital Board. I respectfully request your favorable action on his nomination,” Babauta told Manglona in a letter.

Proa Music Society eyes fundraising concert in March

By **CLARISSA V. DAVID**
clarissa_david@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Proa Music Society, the only chartered music club of the Northern Marianas College with about 40 members, will be staging a fundraising concert in March next year.

Called the "Eclectic Mini-Concert," the show will feature a repertoire of island reggae, rock, and jazz songs to showcase the musical range of the group formed in September 2010, according to its president, Amber Mendiola.

Mendiola said that their March performance is a follow-up to their show at the Hopwood Jr. High School around

Christmas last year.

"We aim to raise about \$10,000. Proceeds of the concert will be used to purchase instruments and sound system for the group so we can do more performances in the future," Mendiola told *Saipan Tribune*, adding that the group is looking forward to doing shows annually.

Mendiola said that they are still scouting for venues where the audience can watch them perform while enjoying refreshments. The final venue will be announced at a later date.

Mendiola is optimistic that the show will push through and would attract a better turnout than last year, which had about

150 spectators. Last Dec. 21, the group performed rollicking versions of Christmas hits such as *Feliz Navidad*, *Jingle Bell Rock*, and *Last Christmas* for clients at the Aging Center.

150 spectators.

Mendiola urged the community to support their group by watching next year's concert. For more information, call NMC at 234-3690 Ext. 1253 or 1007.



Mochitsuki Festival to ring in New Year

The non-profit group PDM Promoters, Inc. will be welcoming the New Year the Japanese way by hosting the Mochitsuki Festival at Paseo de Marianas in Garapan on Dec. 29.

Sonia Siwa of PDM Promoters said this year marks the third celebration of the festival highlighted by the making of mochi, a Japanese rice cake made of glutinous rice, pounded into a paste and molded into different shapes. It is the traditional food for the Japanese New Year but is also eaten all year round.

Thursday's festivities will kick off with presentations by the Saipan Awaodori Team

and the Green Meadow School around 5:30pm.

The dance performances will be followed by the mochipounding ceremony—the highlight of the program.

"There will be different flavors of mochi to be prepared during the event and PDM Promoters will be giving out free mochi samples," Siwa said.

Unlike last year's celebration, Siwa said this year's festivities will not feature any game booths since PDM Promoters decided to have the Mochitsuki Festival coincide with the Thursday Street Market.

For more information, call 234-6900. (Clarissa V. David)

BIRTHDAY SHOUTOUTS



Happy 2nd birthday to Jef Pineda! You always make us proud. Our blessings are always with you. May you continue to grow more and more adorable over the years. May God bless you and give you a healthy life ahead. We love you so much! Greetings come from Daddy, Mommy, and Kuya JP.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Happy birthday greetings go out to Mary Lyn Waing, who is celebrating her 18th birthday today, Dec. 28. Greetings come from your friends and family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Happy 1st year wedding anniversary to my wife, Kimberly DLR Duenas! Although I am 10,000-plus miles away and unable to be with you today, please know that I love you with all my heart! One year down, many more to go! 365 married days is just the beginning of many more awesome days that I want to spend with you. I love you forever! Thinking of you on our special day, your soldier Cris.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Holiday Season Impaired Driving Month

Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over Campaign

November 27, 2011 through January 3, 2012

**BUZZED DRIVING IS DRUNK DRIVING AND FRIENDS
DON'T LET FRIENDS DRIVE DRUNK.**

**BAM! YOUR
LIFE JUST
CHANGED.**



**Have a Safe
Holiday Season!**

Drive drunk and you will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.



Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
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Mark Rabago ASSOCIATE EDITOR

MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

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EDITORIAL

Congress has earned Americans' disdain

Approaching his one-year anniversary representing Florida in the U.S. Senate, Republican Marco Rubio said he is frustrated at a "highly dysfunctional Congress."

"It seems like the entire year has just been one big staged event, trying to get political advantage in the next election," he recently told the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*.

It's a dead-on description from the former Florida House speaker.

Take the current showdown over the expiring payroll tax cut. Like President Obama, most congressional Democrats and Republicans want to extend the cut another year and spare the average American from paying \$1,000 more in taxes in 2012. The two parties, however, haven't been able to agree on how to cover the cost of the extension, despite weeks of haggling.

The payroll tax is only the latest case of Washington's preference for political posturing over problem solving. The current stalemate was preceded by others over deficit reduction, the Consumer Financial Protection Agency, job creation, the federal debt ceiling, the Federal Aviation Administration and scores of judicial nominations.

It's little wonder that a CBS News/*New York Times* poll pegged lawmakers' approval rating at just 9 percent. That's worse than the 16 percent approval rating in the same poll for BP's handling of last year's massive Gulf oil spill. Really.

The impact of inaction in Washington goes far beyond congressional approval ratings. When Congress and the president are more interested in fighting than finding common ground, major issues—starting with the nation's mushrooming debt—go unaddressed.

And when the nation's leaders snipe at each other, ordinary Americans get caught in the crossfire.

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China, India and Brazil are on the rise as the West stagnates

Here's a trend to watch in the coming year: the rise of new economic powers.

China, India and Brazil are in the ascendancy, as the economies of United States, Europe and Japan continue to stagnate.

China and India are the two most populous countries in the world, together having about 37 percent of the world's population.

With 780 million workers, China has the world's largest workforce. India is in second place, with 478 million. Both countries together have about 40 percent of the planet's workforce.

China has the world's second-largest economy. The question is not whether it will surpass the United States, but when. Its economy has been growing at a rate of about 10 percent a year for the last 30 years.

India's economy has also been booming, especially over the last seven years, with annual growth rates above 7 percent.

The rise of China and India may not surprise you so much, but take a look at Brazil. It is one of the world's top 10 economies, and it's quickly rising up the list. Its gross domestic product grew 7.5 percent in 2010.

After paying off its debt to the International Monetary Fund in 2009, Brazil now lends money to the IMF.

Brazil has the world's biggest government development

See CHINA on Page 13



Childermas, the massacre of innocents

In Christian dramaturgy, today marks the massacre of the innocents. Catholics celebrate it as Innocents' Day. It stems from the Gospel of Matthew's report of King Herod's infanticide to protect the throne from a possible King as told him by the Three Magi.

The story parallels that of Moses' birth when the Pharaoh decreed that infants be killed to also protect the throne. This is not surprising since Matthew's book is probably the worst embarrassment for biblical literalists. Some tend to take Gospel accounts these days as those of eyewitnesses writing with *New York Times* journalistic standards; Matthew is not unlike a country preacher thumbing his Sacred Scripture and choosing passages to support his personal and theological claims. He meant to present Jesus to faithful Jews, possibly after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, and it followed the Talmudic practice of taking Scriptures as words of prophecy that anticipated contemporary events.

The wailing of Rachel out of the book of Jeremiah is taken as a point of reference even as the early Church presented Jesus as the second Moses to the followers of the Temple.

The Roman tradition beatified the first Christian martyrs of the Church, and enshrined the cult of victimization in the process.

San Vitores came prepared, nay, expecting to be martyred in Guam. He welcomed and courted the prospect. It would be the epitome of his service to his Church and devotion to his Lord. He was not killed for baptizing infants. He was done in because there was no scientific metaphor yet to explain why children were dying (European diseases decimated 90 percent of the population) and San Vitores' Iberian dogmatic desire to make sure that children were properly baptized, ensuring entry to glory, did not appease the non-theistic parents (infidels, we call them) who made the connection that each time a *padre* pronounced the triune formula on a child, the child died! When well-traveled Chinaman Choco abetted the suspicion, San Vitores' fate was sealed.

Marianas' Christian faithful tell the same story, acknowledging Blessed Pedro Calungsod, a 17-year-old from Cebu as a beatified martyr *in odium fidei* (in hatred of the faith). T'was not the faith that was hated; the widespread and unexplained dying was!

Being on the receiving end of colonial thrusts, we always blame colonialists for taking advantage of our innocence, and *Childermas* comes the closest to elevating through ritual that virtue of being victimized into kingdom come. The loss of innocence is a metaphor we use to whine over excesses of colonial masters, or protest the exploitation of one's kind by another who lord it over access to national patrimony and public budgets.

Why, I've even heard its use on the CNMI *vis a vis* the feds!

The illusion of the victim came to me as a jolt in the same fashion as the image of the free lunch was devastatingly decimated by Reagan's sense of humor. There is no free lunch as there are no victims.

By JAIME VERGARA

Special to the Saipan Tribune

Jaime R. Vergara (jrvergarajr2031@aol.com) is a former PSS teacher and is currently writing from the campus of Shenyang Aerospace University in China.



The illusion of innocence is a failure to acknowledge one's complicity to the misfortunes in one's life. Genetic conditioning comes with our birth, along with memes that transmit accumulated cultural memories. We are not delivered *tabula rasa* when we wail our first cry. We are complicit in the unfolding of our destiny from conception hour one!

We might feel that natural causes like typhoons and tsunamis, and mysterious chances like a sudden economic downturn, dominate our lives, leading many to be stoic on the one hand, or superstitious on the other, so when we do not feel ourselves to be magically lucky, we resign as a casualty of victimization. How convenient!

This *Childermas*, sad as it is even as we know of children around the world suffering from dire poverty, devoid of clean water and adequate nutrition, remote from preventive and remedial health care, and hardly recipients of secure existence subjected to the crazy exigencies of stubborn wars, is in the context of a larger drama of life that winds from womb to the tomb laced with the power of free choice. None of the world religions are devoid of the freedom side of human existence, the challenge to take one's circumstances whatever and however they are dealt with, and make fundamental choices of one's own. Much of piety in any surviving tradition, save the inward looking practices of those in motion meditation, falls on the pole of dependence on a supreme being, SuperChrist to contemporary Christian piety, rather than relying on the cosmic permission to exercise one's innate freedom.

Even Paul's injunction—Christ calls all to freedom—falls to devotional deaf ears that consider praying as altering the chemistry of cancer cells, or, God help us, ensuring a parking space at the grocery store before one gets there!

There is the freedom to alter our circumstances, also, the freedom to decide how to relate to any of our given circumstances, but most importantly, the freedom to create the story that will allow and determine how we journey the rest of our lives. The devil is in the details of the Yuletide story; the angelic views the whole panorama and waves a magical wand from atop a Christmas tree. The angel's stance is pretty much my story. May also be that of the so-called "innocents"!

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The Saipan Tribune reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Indelible impressions

The ruling majority may not be suffering from amnesia but the year ends with a strong wish that governance, specifically, the voting public, does. It must be a daunting task scrambling for damage control after issuing a position completely at variance with reality. Why would it tell incumbent Republican legislators to “go drink milk?”

Too, has it reconciled with the Covenant Party after the recent abandonment? Will its agenda work when governance has the indelible impression of its collective failure to improve familial economic lots?

Definitely, these are troubling wedge issues the general public is wary of and won't dare treat with selective amnesia this time either. No sir! One need not even wage PR stunt to block it. It's already rolling and roasting its way in the political landscape versus the ruling majority like fiery volcanic magma.

The flat or loss of income in the middle of a fatal economic storm isn't any help for families trying to endure miserable hardship as a result of mediocre leadership. Said Buddy Magoo, “Governance may be hemophiliac but not amnesiac!” A' Saina!

Liars figure but do figures lie?

Just as I collected my garden tools to head home at sunset, a strange thought about liars popped into mind for some odd reason. Perhaps I was mulling the missing badge of frugality, integrity, dignity and honesty among public officials that elicited the antonym.

Hmmm! Why liars? Is it their royally blind political loyalty equipped with detachable Pinocchio noses? Is it the opportunity to flaunt incompetence in the disposition of matters of state? Why the wobbly courage to do so? Do these employees have a clear understanding of the essence of personal and professional integrity? Is it one, none or all of the above?

Troubling in so many ways, including a critical review of the qualifications of people even in an imaginary government. One

official was asked what is 2+2? His response was, “What do you want it to be?” Hmmm! Maybe this was the politically concocted mathematical formula used in the retirement program to ensure the system goes bankrupt some short years later.

Well, the imperiled Fund is on its way to bankruptcy as active members seek withdrawal of their contributions. The architects of the Fund's demise are sticking their heads in the sand hoping nobody notices their colossal incompetence and the collateral damage they've inflicted against the Fund. Imagine if we could benefit from marketing warped wisdom. But that would be an oxymoron, warped and wisdom, together?

Perhaps it wasn't about lying as much as employing the comforts of blind loyalty to bluff their way through difficult issues and decisions. What humiliating adolescence! Well, the figures of the Fund going bankrupt do not lie, right? Congratulations to evil geniuses for liberating the Fund from solvency!

With a little help from the feds!

In the late '60s, the four lads from Liverpool had a single word hit song *Help*. Most young folks memorized it and were singing the latest fad everywhere they go.

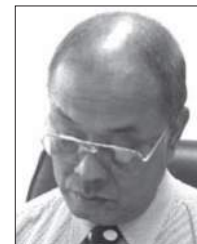
But the title *Help* is most apposite when bankruptcy slowly eats up the NMI like fiery red magma turning everything into ash as it hits. Only this time, there was a choir from Capital Hill led by Benny, Eloy, Paulie, and Eli belting out slightly changed lyrics that say in part:

“We're suing in discontentment, we refuse to bow to lordship from across the sea like the founders did 236 years ago against England; self-government hails from “the consent of the governed,” not shallow dictates from DC of people we never elected into office; therefore, hallowed be thy authorization, thy appropriation come (as part of your obligation under the covenant agreement) to provide for a “progressively higher standard of living” for our people”; peace, ‘let freedom ring from sea to

By **JOHN S. DELROSARIO JR.**

Special to the Saipan Tribune

DelRosario is a regular contributor to the Saipan Tribune's Opinion Section.



shining sea!”

Buddy Magoo was all smiles saying, “Ah, so your ‘experienced’ leadership must be ready to impose draconian austerity measures, right?” Hmmm! Some keen observation!

Of annus horribilis

Most politicians must have closed out their *annus horribilis* (meaning a terrible year), soul-searching what must have gone awry. Cockeyed, they're assessing the likelihood of their re-election. Well, if you did your homework, there's nothing to worry about. If not, then your treasured political career is basically academic or history. The choir would only be most happy to sing *Climb Every Mountain* as you leave in search of another career.

Policymaking is a serious undertaking given that it sets the stage for real growth or the complete opposite. Obviously, we've failed big time on most substantive issues where we simply ignored providing meaningful plans with solid definition and room for refinement. We even celebrate this failure, daily.

The Legislature could do a whale of good but only if it could develop the Legislative Bureau into a strong and mighty arm to review any and all issues presented to it for consideration. Anything short of this need would continue to be an abrogation of fiduciary responsibility. The bureau must be equipped with financial flexibility to retain expert advice. *Felis Pasqua!*

The state of the Commonwealth: The need for reflection and action

By **JOSE S. DELA CRUZ**
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

As the year 2011 comes to a close, the people of the Northern Marianas continue to experience this feeling of helplessness and desperation as a result of the continuing economic recession that we have been suffering from for at least 10 years now. We are afraid that things would continue to get worse next year. Our fear—sadly—stems chiefly from the fact that our leaders have been unable (or have been unwilling) to come up with a sound and realistic economic recovery plan. This has been the worst economic recession we have experienced in the brief history of CNMI self-government. Our leaders have exhibited by their failure and inability to address and resolve the economic downturn that they really have no idea as to what should be done to turn around our persistent economic recession.

It is indeed mind-boggling that, although our leaders are very much aware of the causes of our economic recession, they still have not been able to decide or to figure out what needs to be done to get our economic house in order. To this very day, they have not undertaken any sound step to address the fundamental problems that should be taken to get us out of the economic mess we are in. To our dismay and frustration, they have instead continued to look for “quick fixes” to our non-performing economy. But as we all know, there is no such thing as a quick fix to anything. The only way to begin fixing permanently any fundamental problem, such as the Commonwealth economic recession, is by first laying a firm and solid foundation upon which the CNMI economy could rest on. This way, our economy could, at least this time, stand on firm ground in order to return to life. If we do this, then at some point in the near future, our economy should turn around and start bearing fruit for a change. Thus, to the fundamental question as to whether our leaders have developed a sound and realistic economic recovery plan, the answer is clearly “no.” And this is the reason why the economic recession of the Commonwealth has continued to haunt us.

Any place with limited natural and human resources, such as the Northern Marianas, has to first soberly take stock of its economic potential. It has to review its assets and liabilities, as the accountants would say. It must assess what it has in terms of natural resources and available manpower. It must make a realistic assessment as to what particular industry could successfully be undertaken by the Commonwealth. It needs to educate and properly train its local workforce so that it could implement the industry successfully. It must make sure that the infrastructures needed by the industry to be

implemented are in place. It must have a fair and reliable legal system and code of law. Individuals and businesses operating (or who wish to establish shop) in the Commonwealth should be assured and must have the confidence that they will be treated fairly and not be discriminated against. This means that the CNMI government has to assure everyone in the Commonwealth—individuals and businesses alike—will all get a fair shake.

All of the foregoing basic requirements must be in place in order to have a successful economy. They are all pretty straightforward and simple to understand. But these fundamental economic ingredients must be present if the Commonwealth is to once again see a vibrant economy. Only then will we begin to have a prosperous “economic renewal” in the Commonwealth.

We must also make sure that those governmental practices that negatively impact on our economy be stopped. The Commonwealth's economy will continue to go awry if the long-time practice of political patronage, favoritism, and cronyism continue to inject themselves in our governmental system and governmental process. Unfair and discriminatory practices by the government poison our economic system and cripple the rule of law in the Commonwealth. Unfair and unlawful practices by government leaders should stop immediately if the Commonwealth is to restore and re-establish once again its good name and reputation: politically, socially and economically.

Although some of us would like to believe that the Commonwealth has already matured in its system of self-governance, this has sadly not been the case. Politics and the political process in the Commonwealth, as we are very much aware, have become very petty, personal, and vindictive over the past 30 years. Such negative governmental practices have to be discarded if our economy and our system of self-government are to succeed. Somewhere along the line, unfortunately and many times embarrassingly, many of our political leaders have lost their sense of decency and fairness, as well as their respect for the public whom they serve. Unless our leaders begin to respect one another and the general public once again, and unless they begin to understand that public service means to serve each member of the public fairly and responsibly, the future of the Commonwealth will continue to look bleak.

So if the people of the Northern Marianas are truly frustrated and dissatisfied with the present state of affairs in the Commonwealth, as I believe all of us are, we have to begin doing something positive and constructive to correct it. For if we do not begin to do so at some time soon, we will continue with the dismal state of affairs in the Commonwealth. If we do not begin to do so, we will continue

to let our leaders lead the Commonwealth without any direction, objective or goal.

It seems that we have now reached a “tipping point” with respect to “the state of the Commonwealth.” Commonwealth self-government is indeed tipping toward failure and total collapse, if we do not reverse our present course. We have now reached the point where we must say to our leaders: “Enough is enough!” The level of public frustration over the state of our economy and the quality of life here is such that the people of the Northern Marianas must take action to express their deep frustration with the way our leaders have been running the Commonwealth—nonchalantly, if not recklessly. It is up to us—the people of the Commonwealth—to begin doing something positive and constructive if our elected leaders indeed cannot fix things or refuse to do so.

Jose Dela Cruz is a former chief justice of the Commonwealth Supreme Court.

Letters to the Editor

What is that worth?

What is the worth of the leadership courtyard project? Is it worth the money it has received from the Northern Mariana Housing Corp. and the Legislature? Is it worth the pride people will have when the project is finished? Is it worth the harm that is being done to a landowner and existing businesses?

My landlord is Carolinian and my wife and I are U.S. citizens. What is that worth? I have been in business in the CNMI for 22 years, through good times and bad. What is that worth? What is worth helping longtime businesses stay in business? What is worth Governor Fitial's plea that development projects protect the interest of the landowner and existing businesses?

What is the worth of a request for five feet of land? That is what I ask for—for access to my businesses. What is worth of the project's architect and engineer, and the construction company agreeing that even a request of 10 feet would not harm the project?

What is the worth of this public appeal to the leadership of the courtyard project?






Jou Daehyun

*Severance Optical Service
Chalan Kanoa, Saipan*

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲ 87° ▼ 76°	▲ 86° ▼ 76°	▲ 86° ▼ 76°	▲ 87° ▼ 76°	▲ 87° ▼ 76°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Thundershowers	▲ 84 ▼ 78
Palau	Thunderstorms	▲ 85 ▼ 78
Yap	Showers	▲ 87 ▼ 78
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	▲ 84 ▼ 79
Pohnpei	Showers	▲ 84 ▼ 79
Kosrae	Showers	▲ 84 ▼ 79
Majuro	Mostly Sunny	▲ 85 ▼ 79

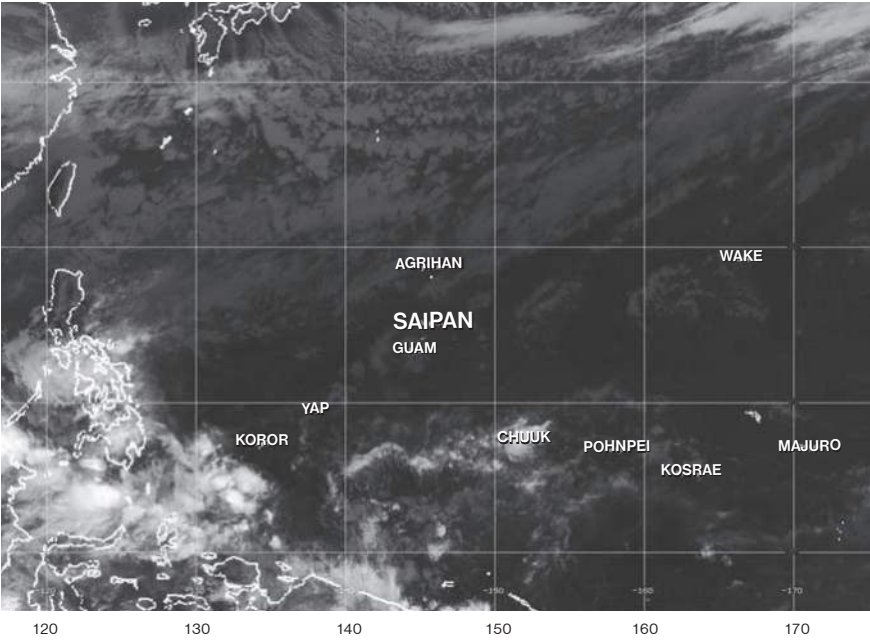
Around The Globe

Auckland	Showers	▲ 69 ▼ 65
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	▲ 33 ▼ 21
Hong Kong	Mostly Sunny	▲ 71 ▼ 63
Honolulu	Showers	▲ 81 ▼ 71
London	Showers	▲ 49 ▼ 41
Los Angeles	Sunny	▲ 73 ▼ 47
Manila	Thundershowers	▲ 86 ▼ 74
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	▲ 72 ▼ 56
Miami	Partly Cloudy	▲ 74 ▼ 56
New York	Windy	▲ 42 ▼ 26
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	▲ 51 ▼ 39
Paris	Partly Cloudy	▲ 45 ▼ 38
Pusan	Partly Cloudy	▲ 46 ▼ 32
Rome	Mostly Sunny	▲ 57 ▼ 39
Salem	Rain	▲ 53 ▼ 48
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	▲ 65 ▼ 54
Seoul	Sunny	▲ 34 ▼ 21
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	▲ 51 ▼ 36
Washington, DC	Windy	▲ 42 ▼ 30

Tides

Saipan Harbor			
4:00 AM	Today	Low Tide:	0.4 Feet
10:58 AM	Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet
4:46 PM	Today	Low Tide:	1.0 Feet
9:26 PM	Today	High Tide:	1.8 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2011
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A cold front extends southwestward from east of Minami Tori Shima at 25N163E to 21N154E then continues as a shear line to beyond 130E at 14N. Cloudiness and patchy rain are occurring along and up to 400 miles northwest of this boundary. A near-equatorial trough stretches east-southeastward from south of Mindanao through 1N130E to EQ134E. Scattered showers and a few thunderstorms are found southwest of Koror south of a line from 9N130E to 5N135E. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers near Chuuk within 100 miles of a line from 6N146E to 8N154E.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:41 AM	5:55 PM
Thursday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Friday	6:42 AM	5:56 PM
Saturday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM
Sunday	6:42 AM	5:57 PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	9:17 AM	9:16 PM
Thursday	9:58 AM	10:07 PM
Friday	10:36 AM	10:56 PM
Saturday	11:14 AM	11:43 PM
Sunday	11:14 AM	11:43 PM

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

- PICTURES**
 - ISLAND SNAPSHOTS Birthdays, baptisms, christenings, family gatherings, reunions, club activities, and other community-related events.
 - BIRTHDAY GREETINGS A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
 - BUSINESS Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
 - SAMUT SARI Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
 - TRAVELOGUE Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.
- ANNOUNCEMENTS**
 - COMMUNITY BRIEFS

- Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

- For pictures:**
- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
 - Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
 - Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
 - Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
 - For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.
- For announcements:**
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when),

- the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- Drop off: 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 6, 2011

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)				ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)			
C05062	2:10am	2:40am	1, 5	C05064	5:15am	5:45am	1, 5
SAIPAN (SPN)-ROTA (ROP)				ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN (SPN)			
C05064	4:15am	4:50am	1, 5	C05062	3:10am	3:45am	1, 5
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
C05070	4:15am	5:45am	1, 5 via ROP	C05062	2:10am	3:45am	1, 5 via ROP
C05070	4:35am	5:25am	2, 3, 4, 6, 7	C05069	2:45am	3:35am	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
C05068	8:25am	9:15am	Daily	C05071	7:00am	7:50am	Daily
C05074	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7	C05073	10:05am	10:55am	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
C05076	3:10pm	4:00pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 7	C05075	1:40pm	2:30pm	1, 4, 5, 7
C05078	6:50pm	7:40pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 7	C05077	5:30pm	6:20pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
C05078	7:00pm	7:50pm	3, 6	C05077	5:40pm	6:30pm	3, 6
C05072	9:55pm	10:45pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 7	C05079	8:35pm	9:25pm	1, 2, 4, 5, 7
C05072	10:05pm	10:55pm	3, 6	C05079	8:45pm	9:35pm	3, 6
SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
DL287	6:00am	8:35am	Daily	DL298	10:25am	3:00pm	Daily
DL297	4:35pm	7:20pm	Daily	DL288	8:40pm	1:15am+1	Daily
SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)				SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN			
OZ606	2:10am	6:00am	1	OZ603	9:00am	2:20pm	Daily
OZ606	2:40am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	OZ605	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
OZ604	3:20pm	7:10pm	Daily	OZ605	8:10pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)				BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN			
OZ608	3:35am	7:05am	4, 7	OZ607	9:00pm	2:20am+1	3, 6
SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)				GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN			
3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6	3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5
SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)				SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN			
3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7	3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
OZ606/701	2:10am	11:15am	1 via ICN	OZ704/603	12:10am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
OZ606/701	2:40am	11:15am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN	DL172/288	8:00am	1:15am+1	Daily via NRT
C05070/191	4:35am	9:45am	3, 6 via GUM	C0190/5077	10:55am	6:30pm	3, 6 via GUM
DL287/173	6:00am	10:25pm	Daily via NRT	C0190/5079	10:55am	9:35pm	3, 6 via GUM
C05068/183	8:25am	9:25pm	2, 5 via GUM	OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
C05068/183	8:25am	9:40pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM	OZ702/605	12:30pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
C05076/183	3:10pm	9:25pm	2, 5 via GUM	PR110/C05071	10:15pm	7:50am+1	1, 5, 7 via GUM
C05076/183	3:10pm	9:40pm	1, 4, 7 via GUM	C0192/5071	10:25pm	7:50am+1	2, 5 via GUM-Palau
C05076/193	3:10pm	11:00pm	2, 5 via GUM-Palau	C0184/5071	11:10pm	7:50am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ604/703	3:20pm	11:00pm	Daily via ICN	C0184/5071	11:59pm	7:50am+1	2, 5 via GUM
C05072/PR111	9:55pm	7:50am+1	1, 5, 7 via GUM				
C05072/PR111	10:05pm	7:50am+1	3, 6 via GUM				
SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)				HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN			
OZ606/721	2:10am	12:00pm	1 via ICN	OZ724/603	12:30am	2:20pm	Daily via ICN
OZ606/721	2:40am	12:00pm	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN	OZ750/603	1:10am	2:20pm	1, 2, 4, 6 via ICN
C05076/179	3:10pm	10:25pm	1, 5 via GUM	OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ604/723	3:20pm	10:30pm	Daily via ICN	OZ722/605	1:15pm	1:30am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
OZ604/749	3:20pm	11:00pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via ICN	C0180/5071	11:15pm	7:50am+1	1, 5 via GUM
LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 5K: FlyGuam; 3U: Sichuan Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CO: Continental; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana				ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The <i>Saipan Tribune</i> is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)			

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota				FRE 115	13:00	13:10	Daily
FRE 100	7:30	8:00	Daily	FRE 117	14:30	14:40	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 119	16:00	16:10	Daily
FRE 100	8:20	8:50	Daily	FRE 121	16:40	16:50	Daily
Guam-Rota				FRE 123	17:40	17:50	Daily
FRE 300	17:00	17:30	Daily	FRE 125	18:30	18:40	Daily
Rota-Saipan							
FRE 1750	17:50	18:20	Daily	Tinian-Saipan			
Saipan-Rota				FRE 102	7:05	7:15	Daily
FRE 200	9:30	10:00	Daily	FRE 104	7:50	8:00	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 106	8:20	8:30	Daily
FRE 400	18:55	19:25	Daily	FRE 108	9:00	9:10	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 110	10:00	10:10	Daily
FRE 400	19:40	20:10	Daily	FRE 112	11:05	11:15	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 114	12:00	12:10	Daily
FRE 400				FRE 116	13:30	13:40	Daily
Saipan-Tinian				FRE 118	14:50	15:00	Daily
FRE 101	6:45	6:55	Daily	FRE 120	16:20	16:30	Daily
FRE 103	7:30	7:40	Daily	FRE 122	17:00	17:10	Daily
FRE 105	8:00	8:10	Daily	FRE 124	18:05	18:15	Daily
FRE 107	8:40	8:50	Daily	FRE 126	18:50	19:00	Daily
FRE 109	9:10	9:20	Daily				
FRE 111	10:45	10:55	Daily				



NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

O P I N I O N

Letters to the Editor

Oppose expungement of criminal records

As a citizen of the CNMI I am dismayed that a bill like the expungement of criminal records would even be proposed by one of our elected representatives. The very first sentence of this bill sums up its lack of logic. It states that "law abiding citizens of the Commonwealth are being unfairly burdened." If these citizens are law abiding then why do their records need expungement? We need to ask ourselves several questions concerning this bill. What is the logic of this bill and its ramifications? What is the impetus for this bill's introduction? Who suggested that

maintaining criminal records is a problem? Specifically, whose past are we trying to whitewash? What is the message we are sending to the general public, especially our children? Are we saying that committing crime is okay because you can eventually have your criminal record expunged? Why must we continue to lower our standards in the CNMI, instead of raising them? As law abiding citizens, isn't it our civic duty to teach our children what is right and wrong and inform them that their actions have lasting effects on their lives and the lives of their families?

Like most people in the CNMI, I am afraid to leave my house unattended. I am afraid to leave my car unattended. What kind of way of life is this? Instead of worrying about the feelings of the criminals, how about the feelings of the majority of your decent law abiding

constituents who try to lead honest lives? And by allowing convicted criminals to occupy elected office, this bill will make a mockery of those very offices. Elected leaders are supposed to be a little better than the rest of us, not worse.

This bill's author seems to be worried about the "rights" of convicted criminals. What about the rights of your decent law abiding constituents? Your constituents have a right to know the background of those criminals that live and work in their community that they come in contact with, either as public or private employees, elected representatives, or neighbors. How about worrying about us for once?

House Bill 17-52 will not serve the CNMI general public and has no merits and needs to be opposed.

Herminia Matsumoto Fusco
Capital Hill, Saipan

Wow

That is all I can really say about the mentality of Froilan and Fitial as exposed in Abramoff's book. Wendy thinks it's not accurate, but I think it speaks volumes about their lack of ethics and skewed thought processes to think of the feds as "the enemy." Of course, the feds would be the enemy because they—Froilan and Fitial—wanted to keep things going in the CNMI as they always had been. They knew without a doubt that once Uncle Sam took over in the Commonwealth, their days were numbered. They knew they would no longer be able to treat the CNMI as their own personal fiefdom. It is disgusting that their greed and desire to continue raping the CNMI and contract workers led them to believe it was OK to spend \$11 million of CNMI taxpayers' money to try and hold off the federal takeover. They now blame the feds for chasing away the garment factories and causing the economic downfall of the CNMI. The garment factories left because the World Trade Organization did away with tariffs on all clothing manufacturing. They no longer needed the almighty "Made in the USA" tag on garments to avoid paying these tariffs. Those factories went back to their home countries where they now continue to do what Froilan and Fitial wanted to do—keep workers poor and make themselves rich by running sweatshops.

They also seemed unable to grasp the concept that the feds was, in a sense, rescuing these workers from being further

abused on U.S. soil. The feds gave the CNMI many chances to change what was going on in the factories; to stop the labor abuses and reduce the number of contract workers. Instead they ignored the feds and tried to resist the coming changes by hiring someone like Jack Abramoff. Their actions directly motivated the feds to take over! Instead of fighting the feds, they could have used that money for projects in the CNMI. The time spent fighting could have been used to find solutions to the impending economic crisis that everyone saw coming with the garment factories fleeing the CNMI like rats on a sinking ship. This is the style of government in the CNMI—no proactive policy making or solutions.

The behavior of Froilan and Fitial's administrations reminds me of the story about when JFK first started the Peace Corps. He initially created the Peace Corps to go into Appalachia and help the poor folks in that region to get control of their lives and to facilitate educating the people living there. What happened? They were dismayed to discover that there was an incredibly strong resistance to learning or to being educated. Folks wanted things to stay the way they had been for over a hundred years. That's the mentality going on in the CNMI government. Never mind that the CNMI is America and that the things going on with the contract workers are totally against everything our Founding Fathers wanted when they created the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. I think all the folks on Capital Hill need to sit down and actually read both

of those documents. The feds were right to come in once they realized, that after being warned many, many times, the government of the CNMI wasn't going to do anything to fix the problems; just waste money fighting to keep the status quo. The feds had to act like a disappointed parent and step in to fix their unruly child's mess for them, as they did not have the tools nor the desire to do so on their own.

Is anyone in the CNMI surprised by the comments of Froilan about taking money from a criminal as quoted in Abramoff's book? Or Fitial saying that a convicted felon is a "good friend." These are the type of folks that the people of the CNMI elect time and time again. They don't have the character or the desire to fix anything that is wrong in the CNMI. To the voters of the CNMI: It's time to be brave and smart and elect with your conscience and not along family ties. It is time to elect people you admire for their character, intelligence, and their drive to make the Commonwealth a better place. It won't be easy. But you all know this is the time to change the government in the CNMI. No one is asking you to change your way of life, just change the way *you choose to be governed* and change the quality of those *you choose to govern*. One person, one vote. I can't say it often enough: Instead of complaining to your co-workers and family about how bad it is in the CNMI, use *your vote* to make a change in the Commonwealth and its government.

Paul Beebe
Spokane, Washington

American Development Bank combined. Brazil is a world leader in four strategic energy sectors: nuclear, hydropower, biofuels and oil. It has five of the world's 25 largest hydro dams. It is by far the world's largest producer of sugar cane ethanol.

The rise of China, India and Brazil represents the dawn of a new world.

The United States no longer is the global economic superpower. And we'll all have to adjust to that.

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Business

Japan probe finds nuclear disaster response had failed

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's response to the nuclear crisis that followed the March 11 tsunami was confused and riddled with problems, including an erroneous assumption an emergency cooling system was working and a delay in disclosing dangerous radiation leaks, a report revealed Monday.

The disturbing picture of harried and bumbling workers and government officials scrambling to respond to the problems at Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant was depicted in the report detailing a government investigation.

The 507-page interim report, compiled by interviewing more than 400 people, including utility workers and government officials, found authorities had grossly underestimated tsunami risks, assuming the highest wave would be 6 meters (20 feet). The tsunami hit at more than double those levels.

The report criticized the use of the term "soteigai," meaning "outside our imagination," which it said implied authorities were shirking responsibility for what had happened. It said by labeling the events as beyond what could have been expected, officials had invited public distrust.

"This accident has taught us an important lesson on how we must be ready for soteigai," it said.

Minister: Spain to fall back into recession

MADRID (AP)—Spain will slide back into recession early next year with the current quarter and the first of 2012 both registering negative growth, new Economy Minister Luis de Guindos said Monday.

De Guindos said he expects the economy—the eurozone's fourth largest—to contract by between 0.2 percent and 0.3 percent on the previous quarter in the final three months of this year and again in the first quarter of next year. He said the outlook for next year was poor.



Yotaro Hatamura, left, chairperson of the Investigation Committee on the Accident at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations of Tokyo Electric Power Co., and Kunio Yanagida, right, a member of the investigation committee, react during the committee meeting in Tokyo, Monday, Dec. 26, 2011.

The report, set to be finished by mid-2012, found workers at Tokyo Electric Power Co., the utility that ran Fukushima Dai-ichi, were untrained to handle emergencies like the power shutdown that struck when the tsunami destroyed backup generators—setting off the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

There was no clear manual to follow, and the workers failed to communicate, not only with the government but also among themselves, it said.

Finding alternative ways to bring sorely needed water to the reactors was delayed for hours because of the mishandling of

an emergency cooling system, the report said. Workers assumed the system was working, despite several warning signs it had failed and was sending the nuclear core into meltdown.

The report acknowledged that even if the system had kicked in properly, the tsunami damage may have been so great that meltdowns would have happened anyway.

But a better response might have reduced the core damage, radiation leaks and the hydrogen explosions that followed at two reactors and sent plumes of radiation into the air, according to the report.

If the Spanish economy were to contract by between 0.2 percent and 0.3 percent for an entire year, it would shrink roughly 1 percent.

"Let nobody be fooled, the next two quarters are not going to be easy either in terms of growth or employment," de Guindos said.

Spain began to emerge from a near two-year recession last year. It had two successive quarters of growth in 2011 before posting zero growth in the third period.

De Guindos took office last week as part of the new conservative Popular Party government. He said then he was confident the country would emerge from its severe economic crisis and return to prosperity and its former status as a job creator.

Spain has the highest unemployment rate of the 17 countries that use the euro, with 21.5 percent joblessness, and is running a swollen budget deficit following the recession that started with the collapse of a real estate bubble.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Royal Dutch Shell says Nigeria spill contained

ABOARD THE BONGA FLOATING OIL VESSEL (AP)—The worst Nigeria offshore oil spill in more than a decade has been contained before reaching the West African nation's coast, officials with Royal Dutch Shell PLC said Monday, less than a week after one of its lines bled crude into the Atlantic Ocean. An investigation into how the spill of less than 40,000 barrels—or 1.68 million gallons—happened remains ongoing, though company officials acknowledged workers only discovered the leak after seeing a sheen of crude in water surrounding its Bonga offshore oil field. Meanwhile, Shell officials say the company will clean up another spill it discovered while containing its own—highlighting how prevalent pollution remains in oil-stained Nigeria after more than

50 years of production.

Turkey, Azerbaijan sign pipeline deal

ANKARA, Turkey (AP)—Turkey and Azerbaijan on Monday signed an agreement to establish a consortium that would build a pipeline to transport 16 billion cubic meters (565 billion cubic feet) per year of Azeri gas to Turkey and Europe. The two countries' energy ministers signed a memorandum of understanding for a consortium between Azerbaijan's state energy company SOCAR, Turkey's state-run pipeline company BOTAS, and the Turkish petroleum company TPAO. The deal allows other oil and gas companies to join the consortium. The projected pipeline, the Trans Anadolu, would carry gas from Azerbaijan's Shah Deniz II field, across Turkey.

CHINA

From Page 10

bank, called BNDES. Its loan portfolio is larger than that of the World Bank, the U.S. Export-Import Bank and the Washington, DC-based Inter-

Nation

Missing Ind. girl found dead, babysitter charged

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP)—A missing 9-year-old Indiana girl has been found dead, and the neighbor who was watching her before she disappeared was arrested on a murder charge Monday night, authorities said.

The body of Aliahna Lemmon was found in northeast Indiana's Allen County, where her family lived in a mobile home park, but investigators aren't saying where the remains were found, sheriff's spokesman Cpl. Jeremy Tinkel said.

Mike Plumadore, who told local media that Aliahna went missing sometime Friday as he watched her and her sisters, was taken into custody late Monday after being interviewed by police, Tinkel said. He said the 39-year-old was facing a murder charge.

"He was a trusted family friend," Aliahna's step-grandfather, David Story, told The Associated Press late Monday, saying he was surprised by Plumadore's arrest.

Plumadore is scheduled to appear in court Tuesday.

FBI agents earlier Monday descended on the rundown mobile home park in Fort Wayne where Aliahna lived and was last seen. It's a known haven for registered sex offenders, though Plumadore is not on Indiana's registered sex offenders list. He has a criminal record in Florida and North Carolina that includes convictions for trespass-



This undated photo provided by the Allen County Sheriff's Department shows Aliahna Lemmon.

ing and assault.

More than 100 emergency workers searched for Aliahna around the mobile home park Saturday, though no active search was done Sunday. Tinkel said the same size search could not be sustained because of the Christmas holiday.

Elizabeth Watkins, who lives nearby, said residents of the mobile home park keep to themselves and she didn't know Plumadore. According to a state website, 15 registered sex offenders live in the park that numbers about two dozen homes, and Watkins

said that makes people cautious and reserved.

"I'm numb, I'm totally numb," she said when told about the girl's death. "I don't know what to think."

Aliahna's mother, Tarah Souders, told The Journal Gazette earlier Monday that her daughter had vision and hearing problems and suffered from attention deficit disorder and emotional problems. Aliahna and her sisters were staying with Plumadore because their mother had been sick with the flu and Aliahna's stepfather works at night and sleeps during the day.

Plumadore told the newspaper Sunday that he left the three girls in his mobile home about 6 a.m. Friday and went to a gas station about a mile away to buy a cigar. Authorities have said the store's surveillance video shows him there about that time.

"I had dead-bolted the door," he said. "When I got back, all the girls was here."

He said he smoked his cigar and went back to sleep, then woke up about 10 a.m. when Aliahna's mother called. After that call, he realized the door to the home was unlocked and that Aliahna was gone. He said Aliahna's 6-year-old sisters told him Aliahna had left with her mother.

Plumadore said it wasn't until he talked with Aliahna's mother about 8:30 p.m. that they realized she was missing and police were notified.

US cities struggling to control sewer overflows

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP)—Twice in recent summers, visitors to parts of Michigan's western coast were greeted by mounds of garbage strewn along miles of sandy beach: plastic bottles, eating utensils, food wrappers, even hypodermic syringes.

At least some of the rubbish had drifted across Lake Michigan from Milwaukee, a vivid reminder that many cities still flush nasty stuff into streams and lakes during heavy storms, fouling the waters with bacteria and viruses that can make people seriously ill.

Thousands of overflows from sewage systems that collect storm water and wastewater are believed to occur each year. Regulators and environmentalists want them stopped, and since the late 1990s the Environmental Protection Agency or state officials have reached legal agreements with more than 40 cities or counties—Atlanta, Los Angeles, Baltimore, St. Louis and Indianapolis among them—to improve wastewater systems that in some cases are a century old. Costs are reaching hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars.

But the price of progress is becoming too high for local governments, with the bad economy cutting into tax revenues and residents rebelling against higher water and sewer rates. Responding to

pleas for leniency, the Obama administration is promising more flexibility as hard-pressed cities look for less conventional and cheaper ways to reduce overflows.

"The current economic times make the need for sensible and effective approaches even more pressing," said an October memo to EPA regional offices from Nancy Stoner, who runs the agency's water policy office, and Cynthia Giles, chief of enforcement. They said EPA staffers would work out details of the new policy.

It won't be easy, considering the costs and inflamed emotions involved.

Carol Rodwell and neighbors carted away 18 bags of garbage from a 400-foot stretch of Lake Michigan frontage near Ludington after last year's trash flotilla. She was shocked to learn that federal law lets cities discharge untreated sewage when their plants and storage facilities are flooded.

"It was maddening that they had permission to do this and we had to live with the consequences," Rodwell said.

Kevin Shafer, executive director of the Milwaukee sewage system, insisted it was only partly to blame, saying some of the rubbish probably came from trash cans or dumpsters swamped when the area got about 9 inches of rain in a single day.



In this photo taken July 22, 2008 and provided by Friends of Sleeping Bear Dunes, the Lake Michigan shoreline is littered with waste that has been washing up onto the shoreline near Empire, Mich.

Fla. crash kills doc getting heart for transplant

MIAMI (AP)—A surgeon and technician from a Mayo Clinic in Florida flying across the northern corner of the state to retrieve a heart for transplant died Monday in a helicopter crash that also killed the pilot, officials said.

The helicopter departed the clinic in Jacksonville around 5:45 a.m. but never arrived at the Gainesville hospital, Shands at University of Florida, about 60 miles to the southwest, said Kathy Barbour, a spokeswoman for Mayo, which is based in Rochester, Minn.

Killed were heart surgeon Dr. Luis Bonilla, procurement technician David Hines and the pilot, whose name wasn't released.

The heart they were going to pick up could not be used in

another transplant because its viability expired, and the patient who had been scheduled to receive it is waiting for a new organ, Mayo Clinic spokesman Layne Smith said.

The helicopter went down about 12 miles northeast of Palatka, said Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman Kathleen Bergen. The town is about 40 miles east of Gainesville and about 45 miles south of Jacksonville.

Clay County Sheriff's Office dispatcher Myron White confirmed the three dead but had no more information to release about the crash in the remote, densely forested area away from roads. The National Transportation Safety Board also was investigating.

The National Weather Ser-

vice in Jacksonville reported that there was light fog with overcast conditions in the area but no rain.

"As we mourn this tragic event, we will remember the selfless and intense dedication they brought to making a difference in the lives of our patients," John Noseworthy, Mayo Clinic president and chief executive officer, said in a statement. "We recognize the commitment transplant teams make every day in helping patients at Mayo Clinic and beyond. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families."

The wreckage was spotted around noon by another helicopter, said sheriff's Lt. Russ Burke. Debris was scattered around the crash site, which was hidden from the road by rows of

pine trees.

FAA records show the Bell 206 helicopter is operated by SK Jets. The St. Augustine company released a statement: "The focus of our efforts at this time is to attend to the needs of our passengers, crew and their families and work with the NTSB and local public safety officials to determine the cause and extent of the accident."

Gary Robb, a Kansas City aviation attorney specializing in helicopter safety, said SK Jets is known as a careful and safe operator in the industry. The small, lightweight craft has low weight and speed capabilities and is primarily used by traffic reporters or police departments, Robb said.

"It's not usually used in donor flights," he said.

Colo. man returns \$10,000 found at Vegas airport

GREENWOOD VILLAGE, Colo. (AP)—A Colorado man who found \$10,000 before boarding a flight in Las Vegas says he returned the money to the owner because he wanted to show his children it was

"the right thing to do." Greenwood Village resident Mitch Gilbert told KUSA-TV he found two unmarked Caesar's Palace envelopes at the airport and realized there was money inside when he arrived home. The television station reported Monday that Gilbert called the airport and eventually got

in touch with a man from El Paso, Texas, who reported the money missing. Gilbert says he deposited the money in the man's bank account two days before Christmas. The man told the television station he won the money gambling and dropped it while running to catch a flight.

ACROSS THE NATION

US weighing travel request for Yemen's president

HONOLULU (AP)—The Obama administration is considering whether to allow Yemen's outgoing president into the United States for medical treatment, as fresh violence and political tensions flare

in the strategically important Middle Eastern nation. A senior administration official said President Ali Abdullah Saleh's office requested that he be allowed to receive specialized treatment in the U.S. for injuries sustained in a June attack on his compound. The request was being considered,

and would only be approved for medical reasons, the official said. Until now, the White House had not commented on Saleh's assertion Saturday that he would be leaving Yemen and traveling to the U.S. Saleh insisted he was going in order to help calm tensions in his country, not for medical treatment.

Asia

PH floods death toll jumps to nearly 1,500

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The death toll from flash floods that swept away entire villages in the southern Philippines climbed to nearly 1,500 on Tuesday, as authorities widened their search for bodies.

The Office of Civil Defense's latest tally listed 891 dead in Cagayan de Oro and an additional 451 in nearby Iligan city. The rest came from several other provinces. Most of the dead are unidentified.

"The search will continue as long as we are recovering bodies," said Civil Defense head Benito Ramos.

He said that decomposing remains were retrieved floating in the sea as far as 60 miles (100 kilometers) from the two cities where a Dec. 16 tropical storm unleashed more than a month's worth of rainfall in 12 hours, sending walls of water gushing into homes.

One of the dead was a headless girl who appeared to have been hit by logs that were carried by flash floods, Ramos said. She was among 13 bodies retrieved by a team of navy sailors.

Navy and coast guard divers were initially sent to find more bodies believed to be pinned down by logs scattered in the sea and along riverbanks, but



Flash flood victims walk back to their temporary shelter with relief goods in Iligan city, southern Philippines on Christmas day Sunday Dec. 25, 2011.

Ramos said the operation had to be called off because waters were too murky. "It's useless to dive when you can see nothing," he said.

It was not clear how many more are missing.

More than 60,000 homeless from hundreds of flood-ravaged villages spent a miserable Christmas in jam-packed schools and gymnasiums, while

the United Nations launched an urgent appeal for \$28 million to help the displaced—more than half the population of Cagayan de Oro and Iligan, which are in the southern Philippines' Mindanao region. More rains Tuesday prompted evacuations of nearly 2,000 people on the opposite side of Mindanao Island, where a child was reported missing in floods in Surigao

city, the civil defense reported.

President Benigno Aquino III, who banned logging in February following previous flooding deaths that experts say were caused partly by deforestation and soil erosion, has ordered an investigation.

Communist guerrillas in the south, meanwhile, threatened to punish multinational companies they blame for environmental

destruction.

Rebel spokesman Jorge Madlos told The Associated Press by telephone that they sought funds for victims from huge pineapple and banana plantations and other companies.

"Some were lukewarm to our call," Madlos said. "That'll be

a factor when we decide which ones to punish first for this destruction."

Another factor in the staggering death toll was illegal settlements along Cagayan rivers. Thousands of people lived in shanties on the banks and islands directly along the water's path.



Kim Jong Il's heir meets with SKorean delegation

PYONGYANG, North Korea (AP)—North Korea's next leader burnished his diplomatic skills, welcoming a private South Korean mourning delegation as state media called Kim Jong Un a "sagacious" leader and revealed a new title that gives him authority over political matters.

Kim Jong Un has rapidly gained prominence since the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, on Dec. 17, and his brief meeting with a group led by a former South Korean first lady and a prominent business leader shows Seoul that he is assured in his new role.

State media have showered Kim with new titles. On Satur-

day, the North referred to him as "supreme leader" of the 1.2 million-strong armed forces and said the military's top leaders had pledged their loyalty to him. On Monday, the Rodong Sinmun newspaper described him as head of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party—a post that appears to make him the top official in the ruling party.

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency also called Kim Jong Un a "sagacious leader" and "dear" comrade while reporting that he paid respects Monday to his father, whose body is lying in state at Kumsusan Memorial Palace. State media have already dubbed

him as a "great successor" and an "outstanding leader."

It was the fourth time the North's media reported that the younger Kim had visited the memorial palace since his father's death, according to Seoul's Unification Ministry.

Also on Monday, a South Korean delegation stood in a line on a red carpet and bowed silently during their visit to the Kumsusan palace, where Kim's bier is surrounded by flowers and flanked by an honor guard.

Kim Jong Un gave the South Koreans his thanks after they expressed condolences and sympathy, KCNA said. Seoul's Unification Ministry confirmed the meeting in a statement but

didn't elaborate.

The lead delegates were the widow of former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, who engineered a "sunshine" engagement policy with the North and held a landmark summit with Kim Jong Il in 2000, and Hyundai Group Chairwoman Hyun Jeong-eun, whose late husband had ties to the North.

Their meeting with Kim Jong Un could be intended to push South Korea to pursue previously agreed upon cooperative projects that would give North Korea much-needed hard currency, said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at Seoul-based University of North Korean Studies.

Afghans: No foreign meddling in any Taliban talks

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—An Afghan government body seeking a negotiated peace deal with the Taliban insisted Monday it would not tolerate foreign interference in any talks.

The head of the foreign relations department of the High Peace Council, Mohammad Ismail Qasimyar, emphasized the government's position in reaction to Afghan media reports that the U.S. and other foreign governments with a stake in the war may try to strike a separate deal with the Taliban.

"Afghans must be in the

lead in the talks," Qasimyar told The Associated Press. "No foreign involvement in the Afghan peace talks is acceptable." The peace council is a group of about 70 influential Afghans and former Taliban appointed by President Hamid Karzai to try to reconcile with the insurgents. The former head of the council, Burhanuddin Rabbani, was assassinated on Sept. 20. Rabbani, a former president of Afghanistan, was killed by a suicide bomber posing as a peace emissary from the Taliban.

After Rabbani's death, Kar-

zai said peace efforts could only take place if the Taliban established a political office that would be authorized to conduct talks on a peaceful end to the 10-year war. He proposed that it be set up in Saudi Arabia or in Turkey if the insurgent movement did not want to establish it in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have not publicly responded to Karzai's demands. The insurgents, who perceive themselves as winning the war, have repeatedly said they would not engage in peace talks with the government while foreign

troops remain on Afghan soil.

On Monday, the Taliban repeated that they were confident of ultimate victory and said that the NATO forces would face the same fate as the Soviet invaders who withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 after an almost decade-long war.

The insurgents "are successfully withstanding all the coalition forces led by the U.S. invaders and will make them all face the same fate that befell the Red Army," said statement marking the 32nd anniversary of the Soviet invasion in 1979.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Detained ex-Filipino leader wants home on New Year

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Arrested ex-Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has asked a court to allow her to welcome the new year in her upscale residence after spending Christmas in detention. Judge Jesus Mupas earlier rejected Arroyo's plea to celebrate Christmas and New Year at home citing security reasons. Mupas allowed her family to join her in celebrating the holidays at her hospital suite in the capital. Lawyer Laurence Arroyo asked Mupas on Monday to reconsider and allow her to be at home on New Year. Court officer Felda Domingo says Mupas will be on holiday leave until Jan. 6 and may not be able to deal with her plea.

China dairy producer says it destroys tainted milk

BEIJING (AP)—China's biggest milk producer destroyed a batch found to have excessive levels of a cancer-causing toxin, in another safety scare for the country's dairy industry. Mengniu Dairy Group said in a statement seen on its website Monday that the prob-

lem was discovered before the milk containing high levels of aflatoxin was sold to the public. "Mengniu would like to express our sincere apologies to consumers," the company said, adding none of the tainted products had made their way into the market. "We will draw a big lesson from this incident and will work harder to meet all national and corporate standards on quality in the future," it said.

Icebreaker reaches stricken Russian fishing vessel

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—A South Korean polar research ship on Monday reached a leaking Russian fishing vessel that has been stuck in the frigid waters off Antarctica for the past 10 days, New Zealand officials said. The Sparta, with 32 crew on board, hit underwater ice on Dec. 16 that tore a 1-foot (30-centimeter) hole in its hull and caused it to list at 13 degrees. Several rescue ships had been hampered by heavy ice in the Ross Sea off the northern Antarctica coast before the icebreaker Araoon finally pushed through and reached the Sparta on Monday, New Zealand Rescue Coordination Center spokeswoman Rosalie Neilson said.

World

Nigerians fear more church attacks after 39 killed

MADALLA, Nigeria (AP)—Women returned to clean the blood from St. Theresa Catholic Church on Monday and one man wept uncontrollably amid its debris as a Nigerian Christian association demanded protection for its churches.

At least 35 people died at St. Theresa and dozens more were wounded as radical Muslim militants launched coordinated attacks across Africa's most populous nation within hours of one another. Four more people were killed in other violence blamed on the group known as Boko Haram.

Crowds gathered among the burned-out cars in the church's dirt parking lot Monday, angry over the attack and fearful that the group will target more of their places of worship.

It was the second year in a row that the extremists seeking to install Islamic Shariah law across the country of 160 million staged such attacks. Last

year, a series of bombings on Christmas Eve killed 32 people in Nigeria.

Rev. Father Christopher Jataudarde told The Associated Press that Sunday's blast happened as church officials gave parishioners white powder as part of a tradition celebrating the birth of Christ. Some already had left the church at the time of the bombing, causing the massive casualties.

In the ensuing chaos, a mortally wounded man had cradled his wounded stomach and begged a priest for religious atonement. "Father, pray for me. I will not survive," he said.

At least 52 people were wounded in the blast, said Slaku Luguard, a coordinator with Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency. Victims filled the cement floors of a nearby government hospital, some crying in pools of their own blood.

Pope Benedict XVI de-

nounced the bombing at his post-Christmas blessing Monday, urging people to pray for the victims and Nigeria's Christian community.

"In this moment, I want to repeat once again with force: Violence is a path that leads only to pain, destruction and death. Respect, reconciliation and love are the only path to peace," he said.

The U.N. Security Council condemned the attacks "in the strongest terms" and called for the perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors "of these reprehensible acts" to be brought to justice.

The African Union also condemned the attacks and pledged to support Nigeria in its fight against terrorism.

"Boko Haram's continued acts of terror and cruelty and absolute disregard for human life cannot be justified by any religion or faith," said a statement attributed to AU commission chairman Jean Ping.

On Sunday, a bomb also exploded amid gunfire in the central Nigeria city of Jos and a suicide car bomber attacked the military in the nation's north-east. Three people died in those assaults.

After the bombings, a Boko Haram spokesman using the nom de guerre Abul-Qaqa claimed responsibility for the attacks in an interview with The Daily Trust, the newspaper of record across Nigeria's Muslim north. The sect has used the newspaper in the past to communicate with the public.

"There will never be peace until our demands are met," the

newspaper quoted the spokesman as saying. "We want all our brothers who have been incarcerated to be released; we want full implementation of the Shariah system and we want democracy and the constitution to be suspended."

Boko Haram has carried out increasingly sophisticated and bloody attacks in its campaign to implement strict Shariah law across Nigeria. The group, whose name means "Western education is sacrilege" in the local Hausa language, is responsible for at least 504 killings this year alone, according to an Associated Press count.

Last year, a series of Christmas Eve bombings in Jos claimed by the militants left at least 32 dead and 74 wounded. The group also claimed responsibility for the Aug. 26 bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Nigeria's capital Abuja that killed 24 people and wounded 116 others.

While initially targeting enemies via hit-and-run assassinations from the back of motorbikes after the 2009 riot, violence by Boko Haram now has a new sophistication and apparent planning that includes high-profile attacks with greater casualties.

Arab monitors head to Syria, opposition skeptical

BEIRUT (AP)—The Arab League sent monitors to Syria Monday even though President Bashar Assad's regime has only intensified its crackdown on dissent in the week since agreeing to the Arab plan to stop the bloodshed.

Activists say government forces have killed several hundred civilians in the past week. At least 23 more deaths were reported Monday from intense shelling in the center of the country, just hours before the first 60 monitors were to arrive. The opposition says thousands of government troops have been besieging the Baba Amr district of in the central city of Homs for days and the government is preparing a massive assault on the area.

France expressed strong concerns about the continued deterioration of the situation in Homs. Foreign Ministry spokesman Bernard Valero demanded Syrian authorities allow the Arab League observers immediate access to the city.

"The repression and unprecedented violence committed by the Damascus regime must cease and everything must be done to stop the drama going on

behind closed doors in the city of Homs," the French statement said.

In Cairo, an Arab League official said this monitoring mission was the Syrian regime's "last chance" to reverse course.

"Will they facilitate the mission's work or try and curb its movements? Let's wait and see," the official said on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject.

The Arab League plan agreed to by Assad last Monday requires the government to remove its security forces and heavy weapons from city streets, start talks with opposition leaders and allow human rights workers and journalists into the country. The monitors are supposed to ensure compliance, but so far there is no sign that Assad is implementing any of the terms, much less letting up on his brutal crackdown.

Although Syria shows no sign of altering its course, the Arab League was sticking to its plan. The team, including Iraqis, Tunisians and Algerians, left Cairo Monday evening and arrived in Damascus, said Arab League

official Ali al-Garoush.

Opposition members say the regime's agreement to the Arab plan is a farce.

"I very much doubt the Syrian regime will allow the observers to do their work," said prominent opposition figure Waleed al-Bunni from Cairo. "I expect them to try and hinder their movements by claiming that some areas are not safe, intimidating them or sending them to places other than the ones they should go to."

Some anti-government protesters have even criticized the League's stance to the point of accusing it of complicity in the killings.

Activists said Syrian forces shelled the Baba Amr district of Homs with mortars and sprayed heavy machine gun fire in the most intense assault since the siege began Friday.

Baba Amr has been a center for anti-government protests and army defections and has seen repeated crackdowns by the Syrian regime in recent months. The Syrian conflict is becoming increasingly militarized with growing clashes between army defectors and troops.



Rescue workers push a dead body after a bomb blast at St. Theresa Catholic Church in Madalla, Nigeria, Sunday, Dec. 25, 2011.

Al-Qaida in Iraq says it was behind Baghdad blasts

BAGHDAD (AP)—An al-Qaida front group in Iraq has claimed responsibility for the wave of terrifying attacks that rocked Baghdad last week and killed 69 people.

The coordinated attacks on Thursday targeted markets, grocery stores, cafes and government buildings in a dozen mostly Shiite neighborhoods. They coincided with a government crisis that has already strained ties between Sunnis and Shiites to the breaking point.

They were the first major attacks since U.S. troops completed a full withdrawal from Iraq this month, increasing doubts about the ability of Iraqi security forces to protect the country. Nearly 200 people were wounded in the bombings.

According to the SITE Intelligence Group, a U.S.-based organization that monitors jihadist

Web traffic, the claim of responsibility was posted late Monday on militant websites.

In it, the Islamic State of Iraq said the assaults, which it referred to as the "Thursday Invasion," were meant to support Sunnis in prisons and avenge those who were executed by the Shiite-led government.

"The series of special invasions launched ... to support the weak Sunnis in the prisons of the apostates and to retaliate for the captives who were executed," said the statement.

The group said the attacks were proof that they "know where and when to strike and the mujahideen will never stand with their hands tied while the pernicious Iranian project shows its ugly face."

The remark was in reference to accusations by Sunni militants that Iraq's Shiite-dominat-

ed government has allied itself too closely with neighboring Shiite power Iran, a bitter enemy of Iraq under the regime of Saddam Hussein.

U.S. and some Iraqi officials have warned of a resurgence of Sunni and Shiite militants and an increase in violence after the U.S. troop withdrawal.

Along with the security challenge, Iraq is facing a possible increase in political tension as Iraq's Shiite prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, is engaged in a showdown with the top Sunni political leader in the country.

Al-Maliki's government has issued an arrest warrant for Sunni Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi on charges that he ran hit squads against government officials.

Al-Hashemi has denied the charges and said they are politically motivated.

WORLD BRIEFS

Man killed amid Britain's post-Christmas sales

LONDON (AP)—A teenager was fatally stabbed and a second man wounded in attacks on London's most famous retail street as thousands of shoppers flocked to Britain's capital seeking post-Christmas bargains. The killing of the 18-year-old man on Oxford Street on Monday—and a second wounding in the same road—did little to deter shoppers crowding into neighboring stores in the landmark shopping district. Bargain hunters were also largely untroubled by a subway strike which badly disrupted the city's public transport services. Selfridges—close to the scene of Monday's stabbing and one of Britain's most

popular department stores—reported its biggest ever first hour of trading Monday morning, while the New West End Company, which represents traders on central London's shopping streets, reported 15 million pounds (US\$23.5 million) in sales in the first three hours of trading.

Mexico's cartels build own national radio system

MEXICO CITY (AP)—When convoys of soldiers or federal police move through the scrubland of northern Mexico, the Zetas drug cartel knows they are coming. The alert goes out from a taxi driver or a street vendor, equipped with a high-end handheld radio and paid to work as

a lookout known as a "halcon," or hawk. The radio signal travels deep into the arid countryside, hours by foot from the nearest road. There, the 8-foot-tall (2-meter-tall) dark-green branches of the rockrose bush conceal a radio tower painted to match. A cable buried in the dirt draws power from a solar panel. A signal-boosting repeater relays the message along a network of powerful antennas and other repeaters that stretch hundreds of miles (kilometers) across Mexico, a shadow communications system allowing the cartel to coordinate drug deliveries, kidnapping, extortion and other crimes with the immediacy and precision of a modern military or law-enforcement agency.

Focus

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—A clerical error landed Kathleen Casey on the streets.

Out of work two years, her unemployment benefits exhausted, in danger of losing her apartment, Casey applied for a job in the pharmacy of a Boston drugstore. She was offered \$11 an hour. All she had to do was pass a background check.

It turned up a 14-count criminal indictment. Kathleen Casey had been charged with larceny in a scam against an elderly man and woman that involved forged checks and fake credit cards. There was one technicality: The company that ran the background check, First Advantage, had the wrong woman. The rap sheet belonged to Kathleen A. Casey, who lived in another town nearby and was 18 years younger.

Kathleen Ann Casey, would-be pharmacy technician, was clean. "It knocked my legs out from under me," she says.

The business of background checks is booming. Employers spend at least \$2 billion a year to look into the pasts of their prospective employees. They want to make sure they're not hiring a thief, or worse.

But it is a system weakened by the conversion to digital files and compromised by the welter of private companies that profit by amassing public records and selling them to employers. These flaws have devastating consequences. It is a system in which the most sensitive information from people's pasts is bought and sold as a commodity.

A system in which computers scrape the public files of court systems around the country to retrieve personal data. But a system in which what they retrieve isn't checked for errors that would be obvious to human eyes.

A system that can damage reputations and, in a time of precious few job opportunities, rob honest workers of a chance at a new start. And a system that can leave the Kathleen Caseys of the world—the innocent ones—living in a car.

Those are the results of an investigation by The Associated Press that included a review of thousands of pages of court filings and interviews with dozens of court officials, data providers, lawyers, victims and regulators.

"It's an entirely new frontier," says Leonard Bennett, a Virginia lawyer who has represented hundreds of plaintiffs alleging they were the victims of inaccurate background checks. "They're making it up as they go along."

Two decades ago, if a county wanted to update someone's criminal record, a clerk had to put a piece of paper in a file. And if you wanted to read about someone's criminal past, you had to walk into a courthouse and thumb through it. Today, half the courts in the United States put criminal records on their public websites.

Digitization was supposed to make criminal records easier to access and easier to update. To protect privacy, laws were passed requiring courts to redact some information, such as birth dates and Social Security numbers, before they put records online. But digitization perpetuates errors.

"There's very little human judgment," says Sharon Dietrich, an attorney with Community Legal Services in Philadelphia, a law firm focused on poorer clients. Dietrich represents victims of inaccurate background checks. "They don't seem to have much incentive to get it right."

Dietrich says her firm fields about twice as many complaints about inaccurate background checks as it did five years ago. The mix-ups can start with a mistake entered into the logs of a law enforcement agency or a court file. The biggest culprits, though, are companies that compile databases using public information.

In some instances, their automated formulas misinterpret the information provided them. Other times, as Casey discovered, records wind up assigned to the wrong people with a common name.

Another common problem: When a government agency erases a criminal conviction after a designated period of good behavior, many of the commercial databases don't perform the updates required to purge offenses that have been wiped out from public record.

It hasn't helped that dozens of databases are now run by mom-and-pop businesses with limited



In this Dec. 18, 2010 photo, Kathleen Casey poses on a street in Cambridge, Mass.

AP IMPACT When your criminal past isn't yours

resources to monitor the accuracy of the records.

The industry of providing background checks has been growing to meet the rising demand for the service. In the 1990s, about half of employers said they checked backgrounds. In the decade since Sept. 11, that figure has grown to more than 90 percent, according to the Society for Human Resource Management.

To take advantage of the growing number of businesses willing to pay for background checks, hundreds of companies have dispatched computer programs to scour the Internet for free court data.

But those data do not always tell the full story.

Gina Marie Haynes had just moved from Philadelphia to Texas with her boyfriend in August 2010 and lined up a job managing apartments. A background check found fraud charges, and Haynes lost the offer.

A year earlier, she had bought a used Saab, and the day she drove it off the lot, smoke started pouring from the hood. The dealer charged \$291.48 for repairs. When Haynes refused to pay, the dealer filed fraud charges.

Haynes relented and paid after six months. Anyone looking at Haynes' physical file at the courthouse in Montgomery County, Pa., would have seen that the fraud charge had been removed. But it was still listed in the limited information on the court's website.

The website has since been updated, but Haynes, 40, has no idea how many companies downloaded the outdated data. She has spent hours calling background check companies to see whether she is in their databases. Getting the information removed and corrected from so many different databases can be a daunting mission. Even if it's right in one place, it can be wrong in another database unknown to an individual until a prospective employer requests information from it. By then, the damage is done.

"I want my life back," Haynes says.

Haynes has since found work as a customer service manager, but she says that is only because her latest employer didn't run a background check.

Hard data on errors in background checks are not public. Most leading background check companies contacted by the AP would not disclose how many of their records need to be corrected each year.

A recent class-action settlement with one major

database company, HireRight Solutions Inc., provides a glimpse at the magnitude of the problems.

The settlement, which received tentative approval from a federal judge in Virginia last month, requires HireRight to pay \$28.4 million to settle allegations that it didn't properly notify people about background checks and didn't properly respond to complaints about inaccurate files. After covering attorney fees of up to \$9.4 million, the fund will be dispersed among nearly 700,000 people for alleged violations that occurred from 2004 to 2010. Individual payments will range from \$15 to \$20,000.

In an effort to prevent bad information from being spread, some courts are trying to block the computer programs that background check companies deploy to scrape data off court websites. The programs not only can misrepresent the official court record but can also hog network resources, bringing websites to a halt.

Virginia, Arizona and New Mexico have installed security software to block automated programs from getting to their courts' sites. New Mexico's site was once slowed so much by automated data-mining programs that it took minutes for anyone else to complete a basic search. Since New Mexico blocked the data miners, it now takes seconds.

In the digital age, some states have seen an opportunity to cash in by selling their data to companies. Arizona charges \$3,000 per year for a bundle of discs containing all its criminal files. The data includes personal identifiers that aren't on the website, including driver's license numbers and partial Social Security numbers. Other states, exasperated by mounting errors in the data, have stopped offering wholesale subscriptions to their records.

North Carolina, a pioneer in marketing electronic criminal records, made \$4 million selling the data last year. But officials discovered that some background check companies were refusing to fix errors pointed out by the state or to update stale information. State officials say some companies paid \$5,105 for the database but refused to pay a mandatory \$370 monthly fee for daily updates to the files—or they would pay the fee but fail to run the update. The updates provided critical fixes, such as correcting misspelled names or deleting expunged cases.

North Carolina, which has been among the most aggressive in ferreting out errors in its customers'

files, stopped selling its criminal records in bulk. It has moved to a system of selling records one at a time. By switching to a more methodical approach, North Carolina hopes to eliminate the sloppy record-keeping practices that has emerged as more companies have been allowed to vacuum up massive amounts of data in a single sweep.

Virginia ended its subscription program. To get full court files now, you have to go to the courthouse in person. You can get abstracts online, but they lack Social Security numbers and birth dates, and are basically useless for a serious search.

North Carolina told the AP that taxpayers have been "absorbing the expense and ill will generated by the members of the commercial data industry who continue to provide bad information while falsely attributing it to our courts' records."

North Carolina identified some companies misusing the records, but other culprits have gone undetected because the data was resold multiple times.

Some of the biggest data providers were accused of perpetuating errors. North Carolina revoked the licenses of CoreLogic SafeRent, Thomson West, CourtTrax and five others for repeatedly disseminating bad information or failing to download updates.

Thomson West says it was punished for two instances of failing to delete outdated criminal records in a timely manner. Such instances are "extremely rare" and led to improvements in Thomson West's computer systems, the company said.

CoreLogic says its accuracy standards meet the law, and it seemed to blame North Carolina, saying that the state's actions "directly contributed to the conditions which resulted in the alleged contract violations," but it would not elaborate. CourtTrax did not respond to requests for comment.

Other background check companies say the errors aren't always their fault.

LexisNexis, a major provider of background checks and criminal data, said in a statement that any errors in its records "stem from inaccuracies in original source material—typically public records such as courthouse documents."

But other problems have arisen with the shift to digital criminal records. Even technical glitches can cause mistakes.

Companies that run background checks sometimes blame weather. Ann Lane says her investigations firm, Carolina Investigative Research, in North Carolina, has endured hurricanes and ice storms that knocked out power to her computers and took them out of sync with court computers.

While computers are offline, critical updates to files can be missed. That can cause one person's records to fall into another person's file, Lane says. She says glitches show up in her database at least once a year.

Lane says she double-checks the physical court filings, a step she says many other companies do not take. She calls her competitors' actions shortsighted.

"A lot of these database companies think it's 'ka-ching ka-ching ka-ching,'" she says.

Data providers defend their accuracy. LexisNexis does more than 12 million background checks a year. It is one of the world's biggest data providers, with more than 22 billion public records on its own computers.

It says fewer than 1 percent of its background checks are disputed. That still amounts to 120,000 people—more than the population of Topeka, Kan.

But there are problems with those assertions. People rarely know when they are victims of data errors. Employers are required by law to tell job applicants when they've been rejected because of negative information in a background check. But many do not.

Even the vaunted FBI criminal records database has problems. The FBI database has information on sentencing and other case results for only half its arrest records. Many people in the database have been cleared of charges. The Justice Department says the records are incomplete because states are inconsistent in reporting the conclusions of their cases. The FBI restricts access to its records, locking out the commercial database providers that regularly buy information from state and county government agencies.

Campus Life

Colleges and suicide threats: When to call home?

By JUSTIN POPE
AP EDUCATION WRITER

The email that arrived at Virginia Tech's health center in November 2007 was detailed and unmistakably ominous. It concerned a Tech senior named Daniel Kim and came from an acquaintance at another college.

"Daniel has been acting very suicidal recently, purchasing a \$200 pistol, and claiming he'll go through with it," the email read, adding details of a reported previous suicide attempt with pills. "This is not a joke."

By the time Virginia Tech told Daniel's father, William Kim, about that email, it was too late.

A few weeks after it was sent to the school, he spoke with his son for the last time, Daniel indicating all was well and after final exams he'd be home for the holidays.

A few days after that, parked in his car outside a Target store near campus, Daniel fatally shot himself in the head.

"If I'd known, I could have taken him to doctors, get him on medication, make him normal again," William Kim, who owns a Washington, D.C., convenience store, said in a recent telephone interview, grief still echoing in his voice four years after the fact.

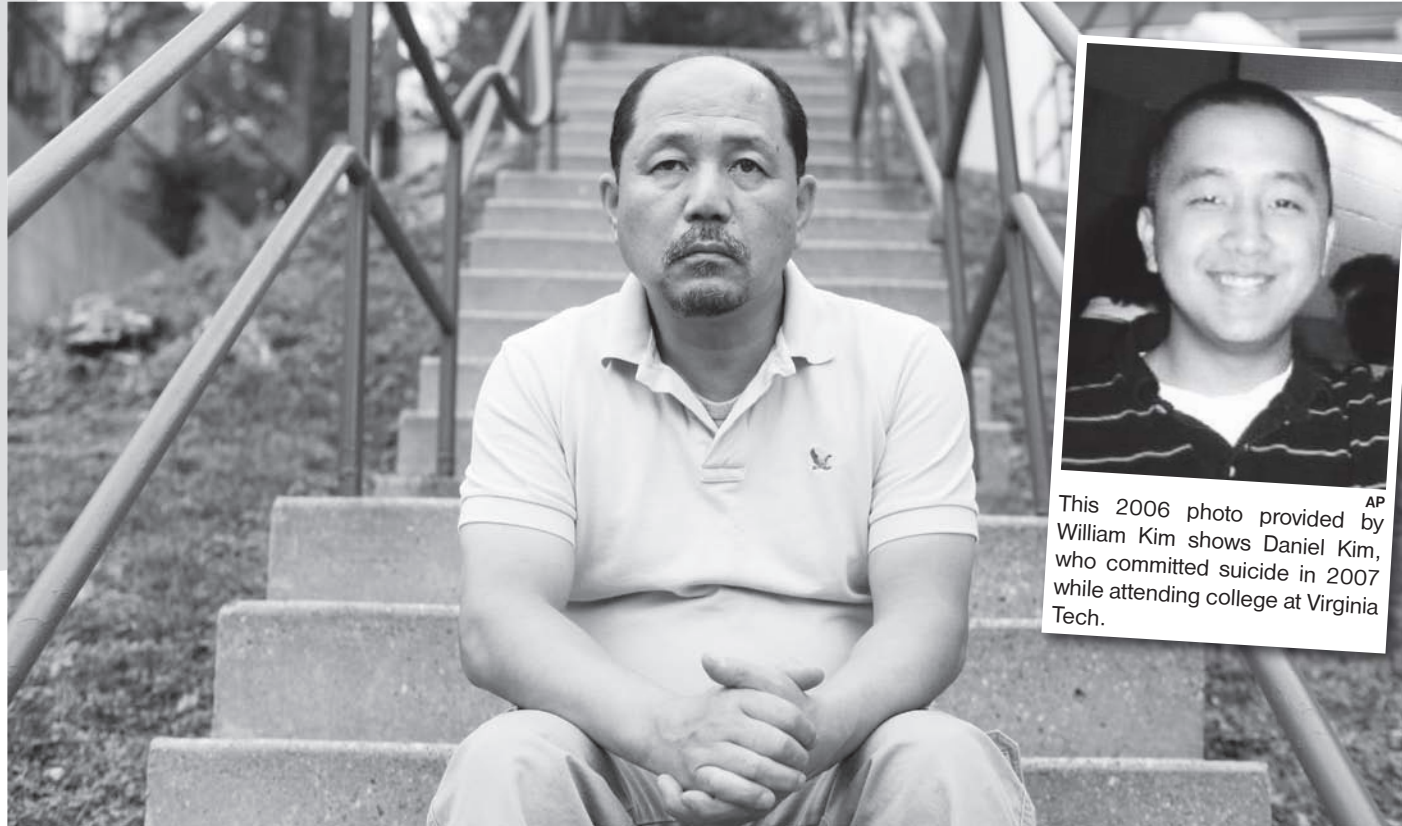
Virginia Tech's actions were all the more confounding coming just months after the murder-suicide rampage on the same campus by another student, Seung Hui Cho, which had supposedly prompted campuses nationwide to rethink their previous emphasis on confidentiality in treating troubled students.

"Who is going to take better care of him than his parents?" Kim said. "I never had the chance to do anything for him. That's a terrible feeling."

In an agreement finalized by a judge last month in a multimillion-dollar lawsuit brought by the family, the Kims settled with Virginia Tech for \$250,000, plus an endowed scholarship in Daniel's name. But William Kim also insisted that the agreement include language requiring Virginia Tech to notify parents of a potentially suicidal student unless it documents a reason not to do so.

The university, which admits no fault, maintains the language reflects policies already in place there under a 2008 state law, and wouldn't have made a difference for Daniel Kim anyway. It continues to insist that, after sending local police to check on the student, and despite the detailed email, it had no reason to believe he was actively suicidal and thus didn't need to notify his family.

But the family's attorney, Gary Mims, insists the settlement goes further than the state law, which applies only to students treated by university mental health services. Now, he says, Virginia Tech must at least consider notifying parents if it receives an indication from any source a student may be suicidal. Several experts described



In this Dec. 22, 2011 photo, William Kim poses for a portrait in Washington. His son Daniel Kim committed suicide in 2007 while attending college at Virginia Tech.

it as among the strongest such policies in the country.

The issue of when colleges should notify parents their adult children may be suicidal remains fraught with legal, medical and ethical dilemmas. College policies, state laws and professional codes of conduct vary widely—and occasionally conflict.

Some mental health professionals call the Virginia Tech settlement the latest step in a trend they welcome: Threats to safety increasingly take precedence over preserving confidentiality. They emphasize that in many cases, involving parents is not only right, but helpful.

"There's some good evidence if someone is really sick, that involving family in their treatment planning, the medication, helping them stay on track, are really good things to do," said Greg Eells, director of counseling and psychological services at Cornell University in New York, which has changed several policies to make notifying parents more common. "I think the (Virginia Tech settlement) is kind of affirming that."

But many remain wary of top-down pressure on counselors to notify parents as the default option, even if such policies are well-intentioned and allow exceptions. Many students have just passing thoughts of suicide. Also, relationships with parents may be part of the problem. Involving them too readily might discourage some people from getting help, or complicate treatment once they do.

"The less flexibility we have, it actually compromises care," said Mary-Jeanne Raleigh, director of counseling services at St. Mary's College in Maryland and president of ACCA, the American College Counseling Association. Overly rigid policies mean, she said, "I can't review what is best for the individual standing in front of me because the law is saying you have to x, y and z."

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students, behind automobile accidents. A 2010 survey of counseling center directors found at least 133 college students had taken their lives in the previous year. The better indicator is probably the rate, estimated at about 6 to 7.5 per 100,000—though that's only about half the suicide rate for similarly aged people not in college.

But while the research highlights the danger, it also sheds light on why these are tough calls for colleges. Warning signs aren't always as black and white as they were at Virginia Tech. A milder form of suicidal ideation—fleeting hopelessness or thoughts about death—is common among college-age students.

A 2009 survey of 26,000 students at 70 colleges found that roughly half reported having had at least occasional suicidal thoughts. But more than half of those said such thoughts lasted a day or less. Roughly 6 percent of undergraduates reported they had "seriously considered attempting suicide" in the last 12

months. Colleges must determine who's most at risk—typically those who have made detailed plans and acquired means such as a weapon or pills.

"Someone who's seeking help but says, 'I have to admit I have these thoughts five or six times a day and they're kind of scary'—that's someone I wouldn't necessarily feel compelled to call the parents right away," Raleigh said. "That's very different from the person I get a call from at 3 o'clock on a Saturday morning who's been drinking and has immediate plans to kill themselves."

The 2010 survey of counseling directors found that when a client was considered a "suicidal risk" but didn't meet the state-law criteria for involuntary hospitalization, 41 percent wouldn't notify anyone else without a signed release from the student. Only 13 percent said they would notify family; 22 percent said they would notify a superior, and 19 percent said it would depend on the situation.

Why the hesitation to involve family? The data also show why colleges worry so much about any action that might discourage troubled students from seeking help: 80 percent of students who commit suicide, like Kim, never participated in campus counseling services.

"I'm in favor of notifying parents," said Carolyn Wolf, a mental health lawyer who advises college officials. "These are kids who are 18, 19, 20 years old, they're legally adults,

but I don't think they're developmentally adults at that point. Parents are much more involved in kids' lives these days for a longer period of time." Still, she said, "you need to give some amount of flexibility to those people who are in the trenches."

Wolf advises parents to remember that FERPA, the federal education privacy law, has clear exceptions for risks to health and safety, as do state laws. HIPAA, the federal medical privacy law, generally doesn't apply to colleges. And while counselors and psychiatrists may be unable to discuss a student they are treating, those rules don't apply to anyone else on campus; faculty and administrators can call home about behavioral issues.

And, Wolf points out, nothing forbids counselors from listening.

Parents "can call a counseling center and say, 'I think this meets one of the (confidentiality) exceptions, but even if you can't tell me things, you need to listen to me give you history, give you information,'" Wolf said.

William Kim's lawsuit against Virginia Tech contends the school broke its own protocol, which called for any student who had made even a gesture about suicide to see a psychologist on call immediately. Instead, officials discussed the email the morning they received it, and dispatched a local police officer to Kim's off-campus residence.

The officer reported Kim "appeared to be OK" and that Kim said he didn't know the student

who had sent the email. That student appeared to know Kim through online gaming. The university also checked to see if Kim had purchased a gun. Apparently he had not, but did so a few weeks later.

Confidentiality laws would not have prevented Virginia Tech from contacting Kim's parents because he was not a patient of the university counseling center. But university officials decided not to reach out. Having received no other unsolicited indications from family, acquaintances or teachers that Kim might be suicidal, they concluded he was not a danger.

Ed Spencer, Virginia Tech's vice president for student affairs, acknowledged that the university has wide latitude to contact family if a student is suicidal, and said it would do so if it made that determination.

But, he said in a telephone interview, Daniel Kim "was never found to be suicidal by anyone here at Virginia Tech or by the Blacksburg police."

Regardless of the detailed plans reported in the email, altogether "there was nothing that added up that he was at all suicidal," Spencer said. He added experts the university consulted backed up that view and "were surprised we went the extra mile" of checking on the gun.

But Mark Mills, a Columbia University psychiatrist retained by Kim's attorneys, found the email alone represented clear evidence of a "psychiatric emergency" and that it was "irresponsible and reckless" that Virginia Tech failed to take further action to see if Daniel needed help.

When William Kim asked university officials why they hadn't told him about the email, he says they told him it was "unnecessary."

Kim responded: "It was unnecessary? My son's life was in danger, and you didn't think it was necessary?"

"They didn't call his teachers, other students, they didn't call me," said Kim, who emphasized he was not angry at Virginia Tech as a whole. "Nothing was done whatsoever to save him."

Daniel Kim was a happy kid, said his father, who only later learned his son had agonized about his perceived resemblance to Cho and experienced anti-Korean slurs after the shootings on campus the April before he took his own life.

Only later did William Kim learn his son had secluded himself for two weeks in his dorm—the same building where Cho killed his first two victims.

"When somebody's life is in danger, all the privacy, that should go out the window," he said. "No matter how bad your relationship with your parents, when something like that happens you want to know." He added: "He was suffering at that school. We had no idea."

Life & Style

More accurate view of Washington crossing debuts

NEW YORK (AP)—One of America's most famous images, a painting of George Washington crossing the Delaware River, got much of the story wrong: The American commander wouldn't have stood triumphantly on a rowboat in daylight, but on a ferry bracing himself against a fierce snowstorm on Christmas night.

That's the historic scene depicted in a new painting that goes on display this week at the New-York Historical Society museum in Manhattan.

"No one in his right mind would have stood up in a rowboat in that weather," artist Mort Kunstler said. "It would have capsized."

He told The Associated Press that he's "not knocking the original"—the well-known 1851 painting by German-born artist Emanuel Leutze, who Kunstler says "was glorifying Washington using what he knew at the time." But Kunstler said his new piece is aimed at righting the historical mistakes.

Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware from Pennsylvania to New Jersey to mount a surprise attack on Hessian forces at the Battle of Trenton on Dec. 26, 1776. The Americans killed 22 Hessians, wounded 98 and captured nearly 900 while losing only three of their own men. It was a daring feat led by the man who would become the nation's first president, and boosted the morale of the fledgling American army.

Relying on military experts and historians, plus visits to the river site, Kunstler came up with a list of inaccuracies in Leutze's painting and set out to correct them in his new work.

The most obvious is that Washington would not have used the earliest stars-and-stripes flag that appears in the Leutze work; it wasn't adopted until 1777.



This undated photo of a painting provided by artist Mort Kunstler shows "Washington Crossed the Delaware."

Instead of a rowboat, the troops probably boarded a flat-bottomed ferry big and stable enough to carry cannons, plus the horses to pull them, Kunstler said. Such boats were hitched to cables to stabilize them.

The Leutze painting shows the New Jersey shore clearly in the distance. But Kunstler says documents show a nor'easter had swept in that

night, bringing freezing rain, hail and snow that would have cut the visibility.

The new painting shows a determined Washington holding onto a cannon, illuminated by a torch as he heads into battle outnumbered and under-equipped.

His troops were a ragtag bunch. Instead of military uniforms, they likely wore hunting jackets and

wool caps, Kunstler said.

While he was able to verify the weather, time of day and vessel type, the artist said, he based other details like clothing "on probability."

"I don't see any reason you can't make this scene dramatic and exciting—and historically correct," said Kunstler, an 81-year-old Brooklyn native.

His painting, entitled "Washington's Crossing: McConkey's Ferry, Dec. 26, 1776," debuts Monday.

Leutze's painting is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, on the other side of Central Park. But art lovers will have to wait a few more weeks before they can compare the two paintings in real life: The Leutze piece is in storage pending the opening of the new American Wing on Jan. 16.

"It's always been the one work of art people ask for," Met spokesman Harold Holzer said. The museum recently had the painting reframed in the style in which it was first shown in New York in 1895 at a charity benefiting Civil War soldiers.

Leutze "made the scene as dramatic as he could, and it obviously has had an impact on people," Holzer said.

Holzer, who is himself a historian, planned to participate in Monday's presentation of Kunstler's painting.

George Michael thanks hospital for saving life

LONDON (AP)—Fighting back tears, singer George Michael appeared outside his London home Friday to acknowledge that he had nearly died during his month-long battle with pneumonia.

He said it had been "touch and go" while he was in the intensive care unit of a Vienna hospital battling an extremely dangerous form of pneumonia but that his representatives had "played it down" to avoid alarming his fans.

"They spent three weeks keeping me alive basically," said the singer, who appeared to have lost weight during his ordeal. "I don't want to take you through all of it because some of it I want to protect my family from and I'm sure I'll get it all written down but it was by far the worst month of my life."

He seemed short of breath and at times had trouble speaking during his 10-minute appearance.

"I'm very weak but I feel amazing," the pop star said, wearing a gray overcoat and scarf as he stood in front of a decorated Christmas tree outside his imposing red brick home in the Highgate neighborhood of north London.

The singer behind hits such as "Careless Whisper", "Faith" and "Father Figure" said the experience would make him more spiritual and appreciative of his life.

"I have an amazing, amazing life and if I wasn't spiritual



In this May 11, 2011 file photo British singer George Michael poses for the cameras at an event to announce his European Orchestral tour in London.

enough before the last four five weeks then I certainly am now," he said.

Michael seemed overcome with emotion as he expressed gratitude for being alive and thanked the medical staff in Vienna for taking such good care of him.

"I really, really, really, really, from the bottom of my heart, thank everybody who sent messages and everybody in that IC unit that made sure I'm still here today," Michael said.

Michael did not provide many medical details about his illness, which forced him to cancel an extensive European tour.

He had streptococcus pneumonia, a bacterial form of the disease that can sometimes lead to fatal complications.

Michael spoke about having

"woken up" 10 days ago, implying that he had been in a coma. He also revealed he had undergone a tracheotomy while in the hospital. This treatment would have helped him to breathe.

"I spent the last 10 days since I woke up literally thanking people for saving my life which is something I have never had to do before and never want to do again," he said.

Michael, 48, had been rushed to AKH Hospital in Vienna late last month after canceling a performance in the Austrian capital. He was released from the hospital Thursday and was deemed fit enough to fly to London, his primary home.

During his hospital stay, some London newspapers reported that he was gravely ill even as the singer's publicists said he

was improving. Michael's personal account of his illness Friday seemed to support the newspaper claims that he had been in a life-threatening situation.

Very few details were released during his hospital stay, although Michael's doctors did say publicly he is not suffering from any underlying medical problems.

Michael vowed to resume his career and perform for everyone who had a ticket for his canceled shows. He also said he

wants to play one show for the doctors who worked so hard to keep him alive.

"I'm incredibly, incredibly fortunate to be here and incredibly fortunate to have picked up this bug where I did because apparently the hospital in Austria that they rushed me to was absolutely the best place in the world I could have been to deal with pneumonia, so I have to believe that somebody thinks I've still got some work to do here," Michael said.

MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION

Thank You for your Sympathy, Prayers, and Kindness...

+Gerald Victor Skilang Sablan

November 28, 1956 – December 4, 2011

May we send our heartfelt thanks to all who gave so generously of their time, prayers and kindness in the passing of a loved and sorely missed son, brother, father and husband. We are truly indebted to the doctors, nurses and staff who cared for and comforted Gerald during his illness. We are touched by all who joined us in the rosaries, prayed with us at the Mass of Christian Burial and who made time to join us in honoring Gerald during the Veteran's burial ceremony.

For your unselfish kindness, for your thoughts and words of comfort, for your beautiful music and for your prayers, we say Thank You, Si Yu'us Ma'ase and Me Sulang.

Merry Christmas and may the good Lord bless you always.

Agnes Skilang Sablan and Family

Royal grandkids visit Prince Philip in hospital

LONDON (AP)—Queen Elizabeth II emphasized the importance of family in her Christmas message this year and her grandchildren brought some Christmas cheer to her husband, Prince Philip, as he recovered in a hospital after a heart procedure.

The 90-year-old prince was forced to miss the royal family's traditional Christmas

festivities—opening presents together, going to a morning church service and viewing the Queen's Christmas broadcast—after doctors put a coronary stent in. Philip had gone to the hospital on Friday complaining of chest pains, which doctors determined were caused by a blocked coronary artery.

Buckingham Palace said it

does not know yet when Philip will be released.

"The Duke is in good spirits and will remain in hospital under observation for a short period," the palace said.

Prince William and his brother Prince Harry drove in separate cars to Papworth Hospital from Sandringham, Elizabeth's sprawling estate where the royal

family gathered to celebrate Christmas.

Prince Andrew's daughters, Beatrice and Eugenie, also came to the hospital, along with Princess Anne's children, Zara and Peter.

The 45-minute visit from the royal grandchildren came after Elizabeth's annual, pre-recorded Christmas message to the na-

tion aired. The royal family reportedly watches the broadcast together every year.

The theme of her broadcast—family—was especially poignant with Philip in the hospital recovering. The message was recorded Dec. 9, before Philip, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, went into the hospital.

Wearing a festive red dress, the Queen said the importance of family was driven home by the marriages of two of her grandchildren this year—William and Zara. William's royal wedding at Westminster Abbey captivated the world in April, and Zara had a quiet but elegant celebration in July.

The 85-year-old queen has made a prerecorded Christmas broadcast on radio since 1952 and on television since 1957. She writes the speeches herself, and the broadcasts mark the rare occasion on which the queen voices her own opinion without government consultation.

Elizabeth spoke of the strength family can provide during times of hardship and how friendships are often formed in difficult times.

She pointed to the Commonwealth nations as an example that family "does not necessarily mean blood relatives but often a description of a community."

With one notable absence—Philip's—the royal family kicked off their Christmas earlier Sunday with a traditional morning service at St. Mary Magdalene Church, on the Sandringham Estate.

The huge crowds that gath-

ered outside the church to catch a glimpse of the Queen got an early peek when the royals made a quick private visit to the church ahead of the services. Less than two hours later, they were back—in different clothes—for the Christmas service.

The Queen arrived first—dressed in a lavender-colored coat and hat—in a royal limousine, leading the way into the church. Her oldest son, Prince Charles, and his wife, Camilla, trailed behind.

Harry walked in with his brother William and new sister-in-law Kate—now known as the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Kate, whose style is closely watched around the world and who sends any dress she wears flying off the shelves in Britain, wore an eggplant-colored coat and matching hat.

Among the other royals, Zara was joined by her new husband Mike Tindall, an English rugby player.

After the service, local children lined up to give bouquets of flowers to the queen. Thanking each well-wisher, the queen then handed the bouquets to granddaughters Beatrice and Eugenie.

Well-wisher Camilla Fitt, 71, said Charles told her that his father was "very determined" to get well.

"Charles said he is coming on," said Fitt.

The royal family then traveled back to the house for lunch, an integral part of their celebration.

Cruise's 'Mission' accomplishes box-office win

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Hollywood has picked up a little Christmas bonus.

Studios generally underestimated the size of their movie audiences over the weekend, and they're now revising the holiday revenues upward.

Leading the way is Tom Cruise's "Mission: Impossible—Ghost Protocol," which

pulled in \$29.5 million for the weekend. That Monday figure is \$3 million more than distributor Paramount estimated a day earlier.

For the four-day period Friday to Monday, Paramount estimates "Ghost Protocol" will have taken in \$46.2 million to raise its domestic total to \$78.6 million. That's on top of \$140



Actor Tom Cruise attends the U.S. premiere of "Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol" at the Ziegfeld Theatre on Monday, Dec. 19, 2011 in New York.

million the film has taken in overseas, giving it a worldwide haul of \$218.6 million.

Studios Monday also reported stronger results than they did a day earlier for Robert Downey Jr.'s "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows," which was No. 2 at \$20.3 million for the three-day weekend and \$31.8 million for the four-day period; Steven Spielberg's "The Adventures of Tintin" at No. 5 with \$9.7 million over three days and \$16.1 million for four days; and Matt Damon's "We Bought a Zoo" at No. 6 with \$9.5 million over three days and \$15.6 million for four days.

In a tight race for the No. 4 spot were David Fincher's "The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo" and the family sequel "Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked."

"Dragon Tattoo" did \$12.8 million over three days and \$19.4 million for four days. "Chipwrecked" took in \$12.7 million over three days and \$20 million for four days.

A few films debuted on Christmas Day, among them Spielberg's World War I epic "War Horse," which took in \$7.5 million Sunday. Through Monday, its estimated two-day total is \$15 million.

Also debuting was Emile Hirsch's action thriller "The Darkest Hour," which earned \$3 million Sunday and had a two-day total of \$5.5 million through Monday.

Opening solidly in just six theaters was Tom Hanks and Sandra Bullock's Sept. 11 drama "Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close," which took in \$71,000 Sunday and \$136,000 through Monday. The film expands to nationwide release in January.

Despite the upward revision on some movies' revenues, the Christmas weekend continued a box-office slide that has persisted since Thanksgiving. Overall revenues from Friday to Sunday totaled \$128 million, down 10 percent from Christmas weekend last year, according to box-office tracker Hollywood.com.

The top 20 movies at U.S. and Canadian theaters Friday through Monday, followed by distribution studio, gross, number of theater locations, average receipts per location, total gross and number of weeks in release, as compiled Monday by Hollywood.com are:

1. "Mission: Impossible Ghost Protocol," Paramount, \$46,210,000, 3,448 locations, \$13,402 average, \$78,645,000, two weeks.
2. "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows," Warner Bros., \$31,810,000, 3,448 locations, \$9,226 average, \$90,564,000, two weeks.
3. "Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked," Fox, \$20,000,000, 3,734 locations, \$5,356 average, \$56,940,187, two weeks.
4. "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo," Sony, \$19,400,000, 2,914 locations, \$6,658 average, \$27,716,000, one week.
5. "The Adventures of Tintin," Paramount, \$16,100,000, 3,087 locations, \$5,215 average, \$24,107,000, one week.
6. "We Bought a Zoo," Fox, \$15,600,000, 3,117 locations, \$5,005 average, \$15,600,000, one week.
7. "War Horse" (opened Sunday), Disney, \$15,025,000, 2,376 locations, \$6,324 average, \$15,025,000, one week.
8. "The Darkest Hour" (opened Sunday), Summit, \$5,500,000, 2,324 locations, \$2,367 average, \$5,500,000, one week.
9. "New Year's Eve," Warner Bros., \$4,950,000, 2,585 locations, \$1,915 average, \$34,287,000, three weeks.
10. "The Descendants," Fox Searchlight, \$3,425,000, 813 locations, \$4,213 average, \$33,716,552, six weeks.
11. "The Muppets," Disney, \$3,355,000, 1,752 locations, \$1,915 average, \$76,911,000, five weeks.
12. "Hugo," Paramount, \$3,300,000, 1,256 locations, \$2,627 average, \$44,927,000, five weeks.
13. "Arthur Christmas," Sony, \$3,100,000, 1,804 locations, \$1,718 average, \$44,062,000, five weeks.
14. "The Sitter," Fox, \$3,000,000, 1,786 locations, \$1,680 average, \$23,488,202, three weeks.
15. "Young Adult," Paramount, \$2,775,000, 987 locations, \$2,812 average, \$8,184,000, three weeks.
16. "The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn—Part 1," Summit, \$2,150,000, 1,603 locations, \$1,341 average, \$270,951,901, six weeks.
17. "The Artist," Weinstein Co., \$1,402,000, 167 locations, \$8,395 average, \$2,900,430, five weeks.
18. "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy," Focus, \$1,210,160, 55 locations, \$22,003 average, \$2,311,670, three weeks.
19. "My Week with Marilyn," Weinstein Co., \$888,000, 602 locations, \$1,475 average, \$7,307,196, five weeks.
20. "Puss in Boots," Paramount, \$685,000, 389 locations, \$1,761 average, \$143,935,000, nine weeks.

LA's 'Wonderful Life' Day honors Frank Capra film

LOS ANGELES (AP)—George Bailey can rest easy. He really did make a difference in the lives of people, including all 3.8 million in Los Angeles.

Bailey, for the one or two people who still haven't seen the classic Frank Capra film "It's A Wonderful Life," is a man driven to the brink of suicide when he comes to believe his life never really mattered.

It's up to his quirky guardian angel Clarence to set him

straight by showing Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, what the world would have been like without him.

In honor of the film's 65th anniversary, the City Council declared Friday "It's A Wonderful Life Day" in Los Angeles.

To get people in the spirit, Councilman Tom LaBonge, several members of Capra's family and a few others gathered at the director's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on a sunny holiday morning.

The section of the walk, it turns out, is one filled with cheesy souvenir shops and sex toy emporiums. They give it more the look of Pottersville, the disreputable place in the film that the evil banker Mr. Potter turns bucolic Bedford Falls into when Bailey isn't there to stop him.

That didn't dampen Friday's celebration, however, which included Jimmy Hawkins, the actor who played Bailey's 5-year-old son, Tommy.

As one of the last surviving

cast members, the 70-year-old actor-producer said he considers it an honor to introduce new audiences to the movie.

When it debuted in theaters in 1946, "It's A Wonderful Life" was actually a commercial and critical flop. But if that bothered Capra, he never let it show.

"My father always said that 'It's A Wonderful Life' was the best movie that he ever made," Tom Capra said. "As a matter of fact, he said it was the best movie ever made."

Japanese designer of arty kitchenware Yanagi dies

TOKYO (AP)—Sori Yanagi, whose designs for stools and kitchen pots brought the simplicity and purity of Japanese decor into the everyday, has died. He was 96.

The pioneer of Japan's industrial design died of pneumonia in a Tokyo hospital Sunday, Koichi Fujita of Yanagi Design Office said Monday.

Yanagi's curvaceous "butterfly stool," evocative of a Japanese shrine gate, won an award at La Triennale di Milano in 1957 and helped elevate him to international stature.

The work later joined the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Louvre museum in Paris.

Another typical Yanagi design was the stackable plastic stool, humorously called the "elephant stool," because of its resemblance to the animal's chunky feet.

The lines and curves of Yanagi designs were as distinctly Japanese as they were univer-

sal, winning him fans—and a place in homes not only in Japan but around the world—for his tea pots, ceramic cups and even the lowly whisk, which became artwork with his touch.

Yanagi chose design for his career after falling in love with

the work of architect Le Corbusier while studying at a Tokyo fine art university.

Credited with paving the way on the international stage for younger Japanese designers, Yanagi also took up more monumental pieces, such as bridges and the Olympic torch, as well as a motorcycle and toys.

He supported Japanese traditional art throughout his life, and he served as head of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum in Tokyo, which his philosopher father founded.

Funeral arrangements were not being disclosed as the ceremony is for family and close friends. He is survived by his wife Fumiko and four children, Fujita said.



Yanagi

Mel Gibson, wife finalize divorce in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Mel Gibson's three-decade marriage is officially over.

A judge finalized the actor-director's divorce on Friday from his wife Robyn, who was married to Gibson during his acting heyday and his more recent public downfall.

The judgment entered by Superior Court Judge Mark Juhas keeps virtually all details of the pair's split confidential. Neither Gibson nor his ex-wife, whose name is being

restored to Robyn Moore, attended Friday's proceedings.



Gibson

It does not indicate an official date for the former couple's separation. Robyn Moore did not list a date in her April 2009 divorce filing, although Gibson indicated they had been living apart since 2006.

The former couple have seven children together, but only their 12-year-old son is a minor and subject to a custody agreement.

The Gibsons' divorce has been more dramatically more

low-key than Gibson's custody battle with Russian musician Oksana Grigorieva, who the "Braveheart" star agreed in August to pay \$750,000 to settle a bitter dispute and split custody of their young daughter.

Recordings that sounded distinctly like the Oscar-winning director engaged in a racist and sexist tirade were leaked during the couple's dispute. Grigorieva accused Gibson of domestic violence and he pleaded no contest, although admitted no fault, to a misdemeanor battery count earlier in March.

Robyn Moore came to her estranged husband's defense,

filing a brief declaration in the Grigorieva case stating that Gibson had never physically abused her or their children.

Attorneys handling the divorce have worked for months to reach a settlement in the case and records show Robyn Moore signed the final judgment last week. Gibson signed it Wednesday, records show.

Etta James hospitalized for breathing trouble

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP)—Etta James' longtime manager says the terminally ill blues singer has been hospitalized after experiencing difficulty breathing.

Lupe De Leon says James' family is with her at a Southern California hospital where she was taken earlier this week.

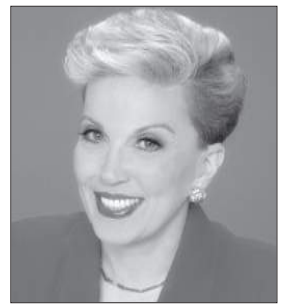
De Leon, who has been James' manager for 30 years, says the singer is "in pretty bad shape" but it remains unknown whether she will be able to be released. He says James was taken to the hospital on Wednesday evening and is on a breathing apparatus.

James' doctor recently announced that the "At Last" singer has been diagnosed with terminal leukemia. The Grammy-winner and Rock-and-Roll Hall of Fame member is also suffering from dementia. She has been receiving mostly at-home care.

A judge on Monday set aside \$350,000 for James' treatment.

Man with roving eye online needs meds to stay grounded

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



DEAR ABBY: My marriage has been on the rocks since 2008, when I caught my husband talking to other girls online. He swore he would never do it again and I trusted him, only for it to happen again and again. We have a 2-year-old and I'm pregnant with our second child.

He has now placed another ad online stating that he's a single dad. I am torn. He keeps telling me he loves me and wants only me, and he doesn't know what's wrong with him. He is bipolar and not taking meds for it. He promised this time he will get help and try to get better.

This is the fifth time he has placed an ad or chatted with other girls online. I don't know if I should call it quits or keep trying. I love him and want us to be a family, but I don't know how much more I can take.

Dear Abby

TORN IN CALIFORNIA

DEAR TORN: Because you still love your husband, make his taking his medication a condition of your continuing the marriage. He needs to be willing to prove to you that he wants you to stay. If he won't do that, then you will have to decide if this is the way you want to spend the rest of your life. And please, for your sake and that of your kids, don't have more children with him until you're sure your marriage is on solid ground.

DEAR ABBY: I'm an independent, never-married woman who has been holding out for the right man. I finally found him in "Wayne," a 49-year-old widower with two adult daughters.

Wayne and I have been together for a year—living together for six months—but his daughters still refuse to meet me. Wayne says they need time because they lost their mother only two years ago and aren't ready to accept anyone else in his life. The rest of his family has been welcoming and sweet. I'm invited to some family functions, but allowed to attend only those that Wayne's daughters won't be at.

I feel like I am able to share only part of his life and nothing will move forward until his children accept me. I love Wayne. I have searched my whole life for someone like him. How long is long enough to wait? What if they never do?

ON THE SIDELINES

DEAR ON THE SIDELINES: You have assessed your situation correctly. You ARE sharing only part of Wayne's life, and won't be moving forward until his adult daughters accept you OR Wayne asserts himself. Wayne should be ashamed of himself. He should have introduced you to his daughters when you started living together. As his partner, you should not have been excluded from any family functions. As long as Wayne does nothing, nothing will change.

DEAR ABBY: My husband and I have worked hard and spent our money carefully. We are almost ready to pay off our home. I would love to have a "mortgage-burning" party, but I'm worried about showing off in this uncertain economy. Can we have this party, or should we just make our last payment and be quiet?

THRILLED IN SAN JOSE

DEAR THRILLED: Taking into consideration that many people have not been as fortunate as you in spite of the fact that they too worked hard, lived frugally and followed all the rules, my advice is to have a quiet celebration with your husband and forgo the party.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more sociable person, order "How to Be Popular." Send a business-sized, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$6 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby - Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included in the price.)

Robert De Niro, wife welcome baby girl

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Robert De Niro is a father again.

Stan Rosenfield, the 68-year-old actor's spokesman, says De Niro and his 56-year-old wife, Grace Hightower, welcomed a healthy 7-pound, 2-ounce baby girl named Helen Grace Hightower through a surrogate mother.

She is the couple's second child. Their son, Elliot, is 13. No other details were provided.

The "New Year's Eve" and "Limitless" star has four other children from previous relationships.



Robert DeNiro, left, and Grace Hightower arrive at the premiere of "Push" during the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah in this Jan. 16, 2009 file photo.

Young Buck could lose name in bankruptcy case

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—Rapper Young Buck could lose his name and other assets in a bankruptcy case that the rapper says is frustrating his attempts to sign with a new record label.

Davidson County Bankruptcy Judge George Paine converted the artist's bankruptcy from Chapter 11 reorganiza-

tion to Chapter 7 liquidation this week.

The trustee administering his estate has said she plans to sell the trademarked "Young Buck" name along with other assets. The platinum artist, whose real name is David Darnell Brown, told The Tennessean he was close to signing a recording deal

with New Orleans-based Cash Money Records (<http://tnne.ws/rQikXS>).

To date, creditors have submitted 22 claims totaling \$11.5 million in Buck's bankruptcy case, including \$10 million that the record label G-Unit Records says Buck owes them over a contract dispute.

ENTERTAINMENT TIDBITS

Aretha's Christmas: 'Silent Night' with Four Tops

DETROIT (AP)—Detroit's Queen of Soul knows how to throw a Christmas party, and she welcomed in the holiday with glitter, a jazzy musical backdrop and a finale of "Silent Night" with the Four Tops. Aretha Franklin held her annual Christmas party on Friday at the Detroit Athletic Club, greeting guests in a teal blue gown accented with a silver sequined bodice. The Detroit News reports that Franklin exchanged gifts with family and friends as Ursula Walker, Buddy Budson, Marian Hayden and Gayelynn McKinney played jazz in the background. During a meal of filet mignon and salmon, guests were entertained by performances by Gwen & Charles Scales and Franklin's son Eddie Franklin, who sang "Some Enchanted Evening."

Haiti leader cancels concert to raise school funds

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—Haiti pop star-turned-

president Michel Martelly will not be singing tonight at a concert that aimed to raise money for schools. Presidential adviser Damian Merlo says the Friday night concert was canceled because of the holiday season and the complexity of organizing such an event. Martelly had said he would take the stage as his alter ego, "Sweet Micky". He also had urged officials from the United Nations and the neighboring Dominican Republic to buy tickets to help raise \$10 million for the country's education program. Merlo said the administration still plans to do a concert next year.

Man charged in Atlanta rapper's killing surrenders

ATLANTA (AP)—A man charged with killing an Atlanta rapper at a recording studio has turned himself in to police. WSB-TV reports that Vinson Hardimon, known as rapper Young Vito, surrendered to Atlanta police Monday afternoon. He was handcuffed and taken to the Fulton County jail. Police say the 28-year-old shot and

killed 24-year-old Mario Hamilton, known as rapper Slim Dunkin, on Dec. 16 at an Atlanta recording studio. Detective David Quinn says police still need more information in the case. Quinn says Hardimon's attorney called police and said Hardimon wanted to surrender.

NPR's 'Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me' debuts on TV

WASHINGTON (AP)—NPR's quiz show "Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me" is making the leap from radio to television. The show debuts Friday evening on BBC America. The first show will be a year-in-review special. Host Peter Sagal, scorekeeper Carl Kasell and a panel including Paula Poundstone and Alonzo Bodden will discuss the year's events. They promise to delve into 2011's biggest scandals, from former New York Rep. Anthony Weiner to the phone hacking scandal at Rupert Murdoch's media empire and the Occupy Wall Street protests. The show will also broadcast on NPR stations this weekend. It was taped Dec. 2 in front of an audience in Chicago.

"Wait Wait" is in its 14th season on NPR and draws a weekly audience of 3.2 million listeners on 595 public radio stations.

Mexican actor Pedro Armendariz Jr. dies at age 71

MEXICO CITY (AP)—Mexican character actor Pedro Armendariz Jr. died Monday at the age of 71. There was no immediate confirmation of the cause of death. Armendariz was best known for playing sly, sometimes cynical characters he endowed with wit and charisma. Armendariz played Gov. Riley in the 2005 movie "The Legend of Zoro," and had roles in 1989's "Old Gringo" and "Once Upon a Time in Mexico" in 2003. President Felipe Calderon's office issued a statement lamenting Armendariz' death, calling him "a great actor who reflected well on Mexico at home and abroad." The Mexican government news agency Notimex reported he died in New York City of cancer, but said his family had asked for their privacy to be respected.

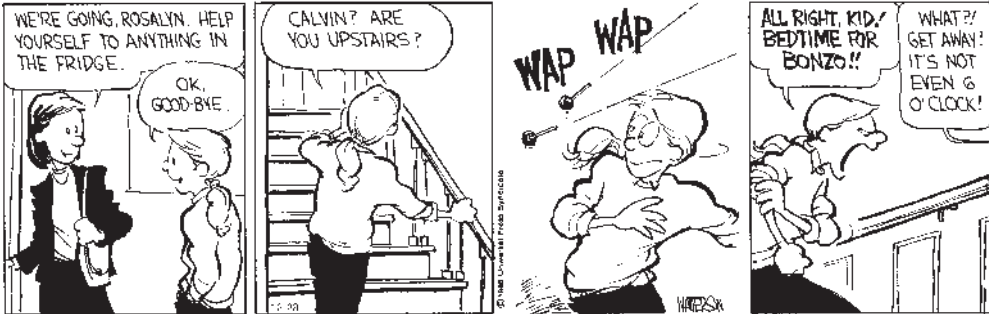
Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

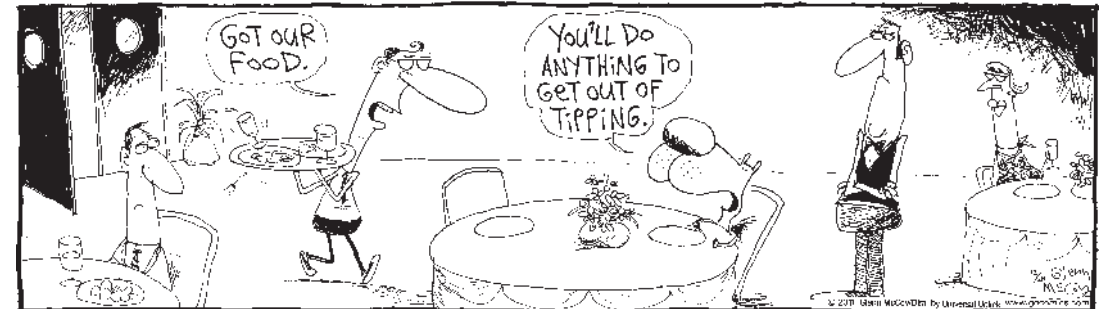


Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

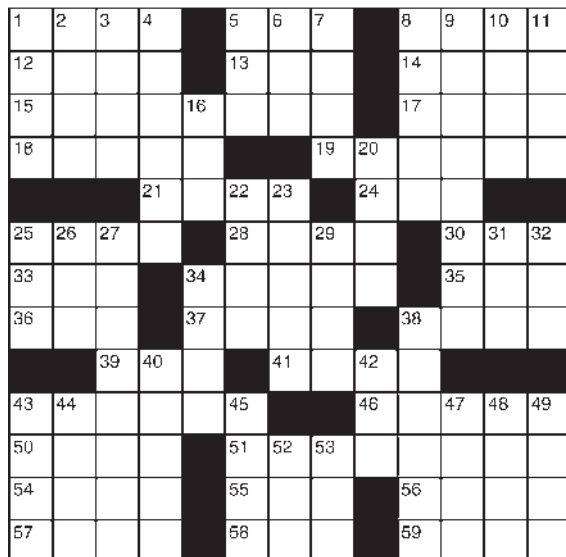
By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Molecule component
- 5 Part of H.R.H., sometimes
- 8 Taj Mahal city
- 12 Building block name
- 13 Hearty brew
- 14 Colorado ski resort
- 15 Military post
- 17 Killer whale
- 18 Neighborhoods
- 19 Chicken choices
- 21 Urban pall
- 24 Big bother
- 25 Garb
- 28 Go by
- 30 Evergreen type
- 33 Historic period
- 34 Brooks of country
- 35 Southeast Asian
- 36 Always, in verse
- 37 Actress Jessica
- 38 Re planes
- 39 Cudgel
- 41 The yoke's on them
- 43 Peloponnesian War victor
- 46 14-Across building
- 50 — Christian Andersen
- 51 Jon Arbuckle's cat
- 54 Ricelike pasta
- 55 Adam's mate
- 56 Require
- 57 Laborer
- 58 Gender
- 59 Deuce
- 60 Corned-beef recipe
- 22 Milky stone
- 23 She wanted to be alone
- 25 Ball-bearing item
- 26 Raw rock
- 27 Chickpea
- 29 Classic R&B record label
- 31 Listener
- 32 Court
- 34 Intl. commerce org.
- 38 Consecrate with oil
- 40 Bad lighting?
- 42 Sprite
- 43 Buy things
- 44 Rid of rind
- 45 A long time
- 47 Antelope's playmate
- 48 Merriment
- 49 Vortex
- 52 Rd.
- 53 Reed or Harrison

Solution time: 24 mins.



Saturday's answer 12-26



STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: David Archuleta, 21; Sienna Miller, 30; Denzel Washington, 57; Maggie Smith, 77.

Happy Birthday: Make the adjustments required to reduce stress and bring greater opportunities your way. Expand the use of your residence to better suit your financial needs. Making the most of what you've got will help you gain a better foothold on the future. Don't let uncertainty be your downfall. When you see a good deal, grab it. Your numbers are 7, 12, 19, 23, 25, 32, 47.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Put your money in a safe place. You may feel like spending, but paying too much for something or purchasing something you don't need will bring depression. Focus on friends, family and loving the people you like to hang with. ****

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You may want to offer assistance, but you are likely to be taken for granted if you do. Back off and do things that will reflect your own advancement in the coming months. Now is the time for self-gratification. **

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): You'll have excellent ideas and should work toward a plan that will improve your professional life. A responsible approach to something you have to offer will interest an entrepreneurial person who wants to help. Love is highlighted. *****

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Don't make changes based on what someone else does. Take a wait-and-watch approach to anything that could go either way.

Spend time fixing up your digs or preparing to make a change to your living arrangements that will cut your costs. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Put your heart and soul into your personal life and the relationships that are important to you. Do something special for a friend, lover or relative. Changing your surroundings will brighten your day. Shopping will lead to a must-have purchase. ***

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Emotions will rise to the surface, especially if you have to deal with difficult co-workers or a minor health problem in you or a pet. You will make far better decisions if you keep a low profile and refuse to become upset. ***

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Try something new and enjoy the company of those you love. You will learn a lot about who you are and what you really want. A new outlook will help you move in a direction more beneficial personally, emotionally and professionally. *****

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Trust in what you see, not what you hear. Not everyone will have your best interests at heart. Confide only in people who have backed you in the past. Don't let someone's uncertainty stand in your way. **

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Reuniting with someone from your past will make your imagination run wild. Don't just think about what you would like to say or do; make an offer or a suggestion and see what hap-

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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pens. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. ****

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Go over your plans. Look at your assets and liabilities, making note of the changes you want to make. Open your home to friends who can contribute to your life emotionally, physically, professionally and financially. ***

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Dress up or spend time updating your look. Love is highlighted, and doing something with someone you think highly of will brighten your day. Your charm will help you get your way and lead to a new beginning. ***

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): A surprise is heading your way. Don't pry. A change in status or position may not be welcome at first, but in the end you will realize how beneficial the unfolding circumstances will be for you. ***

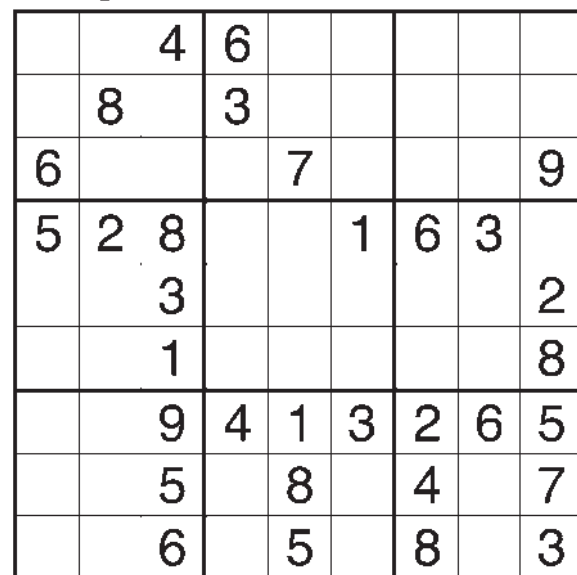
Birthday Baby: You are an inquisitive and strong debater, willing to take charge.

Eugenia's Web sites: eugenialast.com for confidential consultations, myspace.com/eugenialast for Eugenia's blog, astroadvice.com for fun

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



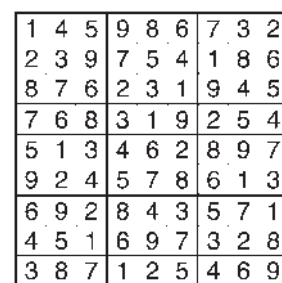
Difficulty Level ★★ ★

12/28

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Saturday's SUDOKU Answer



Difficulty Level ★★ ★

2/1

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

ICELAND'S BIRTH

Solution: 8 letters



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12/28

Accent, Antiques, Army of Me, Arts, Barney, Biophilia, Dancer, Debut, Deep, Eldon, Folk, Gling Glo, Harp, Heart, Homogenic, Howls, Hunter, Hyperballad, Isadora, Life, Lyrics, Matthew, Medulla, Moon, Oboe, One Little Indian, Performer, Personal, Piano, Play, Poetry, Post, Quiet, Radio, Robusto, Rock, Sets, Sindri, Soprano, Sugarbush, Thor, Voice, Volta

Yesterday's Answer: Commentator

The NEW Mystery II is a secret code book that is a must-have for all who love to play. It's a factory-made code book that is a must-have for all who love to play. It's a factory-made code book that is a must-have for all who love to play.

CLASSIFIED ADS

WHATZIT Solution: Apple crumble

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ITB12-DPW/ED-032

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 25, 2012 • TIME: 10:00 A.M.

“ENERGY STAR TINTING FOR VARIOUS BUILDINGS IN SAIPAN, TINIAN AND ROTA FOR DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS – ENERGY OFFICE”

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE PICKED-UP AT THE OFFICE OF THE CNMI ARRA STATE LEAD LOCATED ON THE THIRD (3RD) FLOOR OF THE MARIANAS BUSINESS PLAZA OFFICE #315, SUSUPE OR REQUESTED VIA E-MAIL TO cnmi_tinting@recovery.gov.mp.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB MUST BE SUBMITTED VIA E-MAIL TO cnmi_tinting@recovery.gov.mp NO LATER THAN 4:30 P.M., LOCAL TIME, **JANUARY 11, 2012**.

THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED IN WHOLE FROM THE AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT (ARRA) OF 2009. THIS IS A FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECT; AS SUCH, LOCAL PREFERENCE IS NOT AVAILABLE BECAUSE ITS USE IS PROHIBITED BY FEDERAL LAW GRANTING FUNDING FOR THIS PROJECT.

/S/ MARTIN C. SABLAN SECRETARY OF PUBLIC WORKS	/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN DIRECTOR, P&S
/S/ MICHAEL J. ADA CNMI ARRA LEAD	/S/ THELMA B. INOS DIRECTOR OF ENERGY

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ATTORNEYS FOR Plaintiff

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

BANK OF GUAM, Plaintiff, -v- SINGERU I. TECHUR and DIONICIA K. TECHUR, fka DIONICIA Q. KAPILEO, Defendants.	CIVIL ACTION NO. 96-0354 TENTH AMENDED NOTICE OF SALE
---	--

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that, pursuant to Order issued by the Court in this matter on December 15, 2011, I will sell, at public auction, to the highest bidder, on the terms and conditions set forth hereinbelow, all of the right, title, and interest of Defendants in and to the following property: Lot No. 005 I 274, situated in Koblerville, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, containing an area of 939 square meters, more or less, as more particularly described on Drawing/Cadastral Plat No. 005 I 05, the original of which was registered with the Commonwealth Recorder's Office as File No. 84-1364 on the 31st day of July 1984. The sale is subject to such liens and encumbrances upon the property as appear of record.

Date, Time, and Place of Sale. The sale will be held on Friday, January 27, 2012, at the hour of 1:30 p.m., at The Law Offices of Michael A. White, LLC, Joeten Center, Susupe, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. The sale will be open to the general public.

Terms and Conditions of Sale. The Terms and Conditions of Sale may be obtained from the undersigned, either prior to or at the sale. These terms and conditions shall govern the conduct of the sale.

DATED, this 20th day of December, 2011:

/s/ MICHAEL A. WHITE, Auctioneer

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Saipan Tribune also offers a Super Saver Package—a complete 6-day run on both print and online edition, for as low as \$27 for garage sales, apartment rentals, help wanted, auto and more. You can choose from any of the packages below.

ADS	(PRINT)	COMBO (PRINT AND ONLINE)
• 3-Liner	\$15	\$27
• 5-Liner	\$24	\$39
• 3-Liner with picture	\$24	\$42
• 5-Liner with picture	\$36	\$57

ADVERTISING DEADLINE

Classified Ads

Ads must be submitted before 12 noon 2 days prior to publication date

Saturday Issue:
■ All ads placed Friday before 12 noon will come out Saturday issue and anything placed thereafter will be published on Monday issue.

CANCELLATION

Classified Ads

Cancellations should be made before 12 noon of the day prior to date of publication.

REFUNDS


Refunds will only be made if cancellation deadlines are met. No refunds will be made once ad is already printed.

CHECK YOUR ADS

Saipan Tribune will not be responsible for errors after the first day of publication. Errors should be called in before noon of the issue date. Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

ADVERTISING POLICY

All advertising in the Saipan Tribune are subject to applicable rate sheet, copies of which are available from the Advertising Sales Department (please call 235-8747, 235-2769 or 235-6397). All ads will be subject to approval prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit, refuse, reject or cancel any ad at any time. Also, Saipan Tribune reserves the right to place ads under proper headings and to revise copy when necessary.

**JOB VACANCY RE-ANNOUCEMENT**

It is the policy of the Marianas Visitors Authority (MVA) that equal opportunity is given to all U.S. citizens and other qualified U.S. Workers as defined by law regardless of race, color, religion, age sex, national origin, veteran status, disability or sexual orientation. The MVA is an equal opportunity employer.

JVA 11-005

POSITION TITLE	: CHIEF ACCOUNTANT
PAY LEVEL	: UNGRADED
ANNUAL SALARY	: \$40,000.00 - \$50,000.00**
LOCATION	: Marianas Visitors Authority, Saipan
Opening Date	: 12/20/11
Closing Date	: 01/03/12

**The salary given will be determined by the qualifications of the selected applicant.

HOW TO APPLY
Interested persons may contact the Marianas Visitors Authority Office at (670) 664-3200/01 for detailed description of the position, and employment application forms. A completed application should be submitted together with the required documents to complete the application process no later than the closing date of this announcement.

MVA is an equal opportunity employer.

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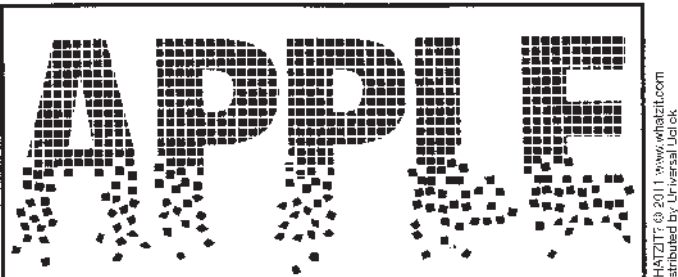


Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
FRIDAY JANUARY 7, 2011
50¢

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK
By JAYVEE VALLEJERA
jayeve_vallejera@saipantribune.com
EDITOR
WASHINGTON, D.C.—The channel predicted near- the day

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Brees sets passing mark, Saints top Falcons



NEW ORLEANS
(AP)—Quite a night for Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints - a record and a rout.

Brees set the NFL record for yards passing in a season, breaking a mark that Dan Marino had held for 27 years, and the New Orleans Saints clinched the NFC South title with a 45-16 victory over the Atlanta Falcons on Monday night.

Brees threw for 307 yards and four touchdowns, the last a 9-yard strike to Darren Sproles that set the record with 2:51 to go.

"So many people contributed to this, and I'm happy for them," Brees said.

It was Brees' final pass of the game and it gave him 5,087 yards passing - with one game still to play. Marino finished with 5,084 yards for the Miami Dolphins in 1984.

As Sproles spiked the ball, Brees put his arm over his head and started walking toward midfield while the Superdome crowd went wild and his teammates chased him down.

"Obviously it's a special moment for the players, especially Drew," Saints coach Sean Payton said. "I couldn't be more proud of him."

Brees' four touchdowns gave him 276 for his career, moving him ahead of Joe Montana (273) and Vinny Testaverde (275) for ninth all-time. He is the first quarterback in NFL history to pass for more than 5,000 yards twice - he had 5,069 in 2008.

Brees' first scoring pass went for 8 yards to Marques Colston and the second for 9 yards to Jimmy Graham. Graham's TD catch was his 10th of the season, a new franchise high for a tight end. In the third quarter, Brees hit Robert Meachem for a score from 24 yards, which made it 28-10.

The Saints also had 463 total yards, giving them more than 6,857 offensive yards for the season, breaking the 2008 club record of 6,571 yards. New Orleans continues to close in on the NFL-record of 7,075 offensive yards in a season set by the 2000 St. Louis Rams.

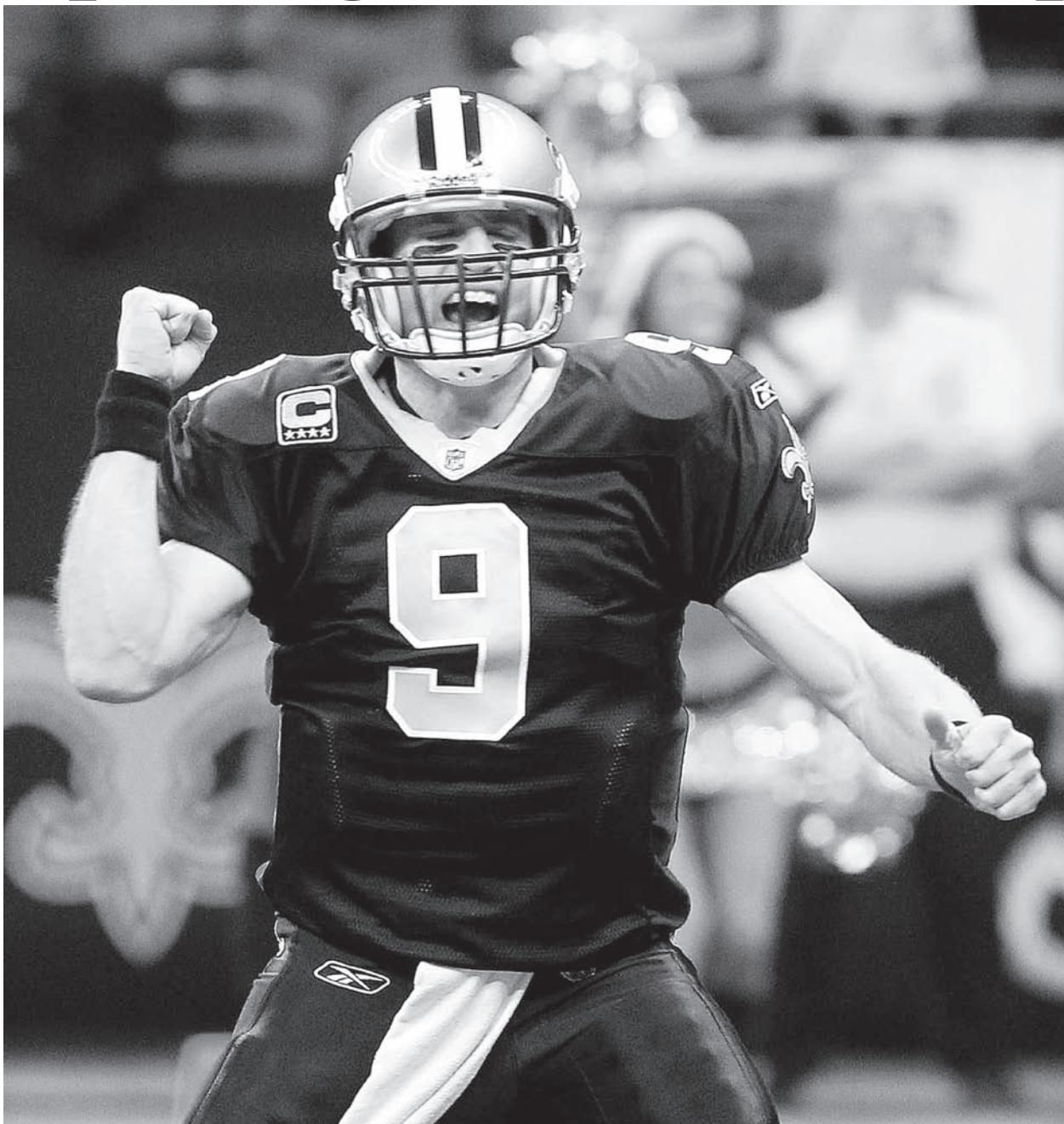
Brees might have broken the record in the third quarter if not for Sproles' 92-yard kickoff return, which set up John Kasay's 29-yard field goal. Brees also was intercepted twice in the game, once in the Falcons end zone, but New Orleans was still dominant enough to take a three-score lead.

The game became a romp when Julio Jones was stripped by Scott Shanle and Malcolm Jenkins returned it 30 yards for a score to make it 38-16 in the fourth quarter. The Superdome crowd was in full celebration by then, but the play also meant fans would have to wait until later in the fourth quarter before Brees finally got his chance to break the passing record.

Uncharacteristically, Brees had only a yard passing during a span of a little more than 18 minutes. Knowing he was closing in the record, the crowd howled, "Drehttp://www" each time he took the field. He finally gave the fans what they wanted after Atlanta failed on a fourth-down try at its own 33. That gave Brees, who needed only 30 yards for the record at that point, just enough space to work with.

Matt Ryan had 258 yards passing and one TD, including a 21-yard scoring strike to Jones that gave the Falcons a 10-7 lead late in the first quarter.

New Orleans responded with a 10-



New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees celebrates a touchdown by running back Pierre Thomas in the first quarter of an NFL football game against the Atlanta Falcons in New Orleans, Monday, Dec. 26, 2011.

play, 81-yard scoring drive on which Brees completed four of six passes for 48 yards, the last three to Colston, who had six catches for 69 yards in

the first half.

The result might have been even more lopsided if Brees' pass intended for Graham in the end zone had not

been broken up by linebacker Curtis Lofton, and then batted in the air by safety William Moore before coming to rest in the arms of Dominique

Giants coach downplays injury, ready for Dallas

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. (AP)—Walking into his news conference to kick off an NFC East showdown week with the Dallas Cowboys, Tom Coughlin couldn't hide the injury.

There was a noticeable limp in his left leg, one that seemingly will bother the 65-year-old New York Giants coach for weeks and might require medical intervention down the road.

Coughlin didn't care. He wasn't going to discuss the extent of the injury sustained in Saturday's game with the Jets when he was slammed into by D.J. Ware after the Giants running back was hit out of bounds.

All that was important was that the Giants (8-7) are playing Dallas (8-7) Sunday night at MetLife Stadium for the NFC East title and a playoff berth. The loser goes home.

"Never better. I may not be able to run for a while," Coughlin said of his health, adding later that he doesn't discuss injuries.

Still, Coughlin had some fun. When asked about Ware, he joked Ware was no longer with the team.

He blamed himself for not paying attention and taking his eye off the play, even though he admitted the late push that resulted in a penalty came 10 yards out of bounds. He even noted he

was in for treatment Sunday, just to check up on his players who were hurt in Saturday's 29-14 win that gave the Giants bragging rights over Rex Ryan and the brash Jets, the team that co-owns the stadium where they play.

The man who also led the Giants to a Super Bowl title in 2008 and missed the playoffs the past two seasons added he has no intention of coaching from the press box Sunday night. He will be on the field with his players in this all-or-nothing game.

"This is a long and storied rivalry, no doubt about it," Coughlin said of the Giants-Cowboys series. "There have been some great, great games between the two franchises. The one a couple of weeks ago was an outstanding game and example of that. We prepare ourselves for just that type of high intensity, outstanding, high level of performance on both sides."

The Giants rallied from a 12-point deficit in the final 5:41 to beat the Cowboys in Dallas on Dec. 11. However, Coughlin reminded his team Monday that Dallas beat the Giants in the Meadowlands last season after losing in Texas.

Defensive end Dave Tollefson said Coughlin has been the one person the players can count on in what has been an inconsistent year.

The fourth-quarter injury on Saturday was yet another example.

Player after player was amazed at Coughlin's toughness after taking the hit, which looked nasty. Trainers forced him to go to the bench to be examined, but he fought them all the way and quickly limped back to his coaching position along the sideline.

"You know his actions, obviously, Saturday was a great example to the public," Tollefson said. "He would never ask us to do anything that he himself would (not) be willing to do, though he is twice the age of our youngest guy. Seriously, he means what he says and he says a lot of things that he does say, there is conviction in his voice. So you can really tell he means it."

And that he led to loyalty toward a coach who let his players know where they stand.

"You don't want to let him down because he is willing to do anything he can to not let us down," Tollefson said.

Coughlin's message to the team Monday was simple: Forget about the win over the Jets. If you want to get into the postseason, win on Sunday.

"We are all all-in," said defensive captain Justin Tuck, who seemingly shook off all his injuries and played his best game of the season against the Jets.

Franks for an interception.

New Orleans bounced back on its final drive of the second quarter, covering 80 yards in 10 plays and only 1:55, capped by Graham's TD catch.

Both teams scored on all their possessions in the opening quarter, with the Saints briefly pulling in front 7-3 on Pierre Thomas' 4-yard touchdown run, after which he pulled a bow from his uniform pants, put it on the football and offered it as a gift to a woman with a parasol in the front row behind the end zone.

The referees weren't cutting Thomas any slack on his Christmas-themed celebration, flagging him for a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

The score capped an eight-play, 84-yard scoring drive on which Brees completed two passes for 49 yards.

The Saints entered the game needing only one victory to clinch the NFC South title, while Atlanta could have remained in the hunt to defend its 2010 division crown with a win.

After Atlanta received the opening kickoff, Ryan completed five of his first six throws for 52 yards, including a 20-yard completion to Roddy White at the New Orleans 23. The Saints' defense stiffened, however, forcing Atlanta to settle for Matt Bryant's 34-yard field goal and an early 3-0 lead.

The Saints responded immediately, with Brees hitting Lance Moore for a 38-yard gain on New Orleans' first play from scrimmage. The Saints then went to the running game, with Chris Ivory rushing one time for 11 yards and Thomas three times for 24 yards, including his short TD run.

Thomas' unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, enforced on the ensuing kickoff, was not terribly costly, as Eric Weems returned it to the Atlanta 28. More costly was the Saints' inability to slow down Ryan, who quickly found Jones for a 25-yard gain and White for 16 yards to set up Jones' score.

"Coach Coughlin is the same as all of us. I know that leg is banged up a little bit, but he wasn't showing any ill effects today and came in excited about the opportunity that we have this week."

Outspoken safety Antrel Rolle went home to Miami for Christmas, and texted his coach to see how he was feeling Sunday.

"Some of our toughness definitely rubbed off on him," Rolle quipped before getting serious. "He is a tough guy. He kept it going. If our coach is strong enough to go out there and fight and keep it going and hang through a situation like that, we're younger. Why can't we do it?" That's the mentality I have."

Some of the players could not help but tease Coughlin a little bit. One of the

Nets fight back to beat Wizards



WASHINGTON (AP)—New Jersey's Kris Humphries finished with 21 points and 16 rebounds to help the Nets overcome a big deficit and beat the Washington Wizards 90-84 on Monday in the NBA season opener for both teams.

Deron Williams had 23 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for New Jersey, which trailed by as much as 21 points in the second quarter, but began to turn things around with a 16-2 run.

Backup shooting guard Nick Young led Washington with 16 points in just 18 minutes. He missed a large part of the second half with a foot injury but returned.

Kings 100, Lakers 91

In Sacramento, Marcus Thornton scored 12 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter as Sacramento opened its season in grand fashion, beating the Los Angeles at home for the first time in more than three years.

Tyreke Evans added 20 points for the Kings, who had lost nine of 10 to the Lakers and five straight at home.

Kobe Bryant scored 29 points and Metta World Peace—formerly known as Ron Artest—added 19 for the Lakers, who opened the season with consecutive losses for the first time since 2002-03, putting a damper on the start of new coach Mike Brown's tenure.

Warriors 99, Bulls 91

In Oakland, Stephen Curry had 21 points and 10 assists as Golden State beat Chicago, giving new coach Mark Jackson his first victory.

Monta Ellis scored 26 points for the Warriors, who lost their opening game on Christmas Day.

Luol Deng, whose block sealed Chicago's season-opening win over the Lakers, had 22 points and 10 rebounds for the Bulls, who trailed by as much as 19 before making a late surge to get within five points with 36.3 seconds remaining.

Bobcats 96, Bucks 95

In Charlotte, North Carolina, Charlotte erased a 14-point deficit to beat Minnesota by the narrowest margin.

D.J. Augustin scored 19 points while rookie Kemba Walker added 13, including two free throws with 9.9 seconds remaining.

Brandon Jennings had 22 points for the Bucks.

Magic 104, Rockets 95

In Orlando, Hedo Turkoglu scored 23 points to lead five Magic players in double figures as Orlando beat Houston.

Orlando got 13 points from Turkoglu and eight points from J.J. Redick in the fourth quarter to help the Magic stave off a handful of second-half charges by the Rockets.

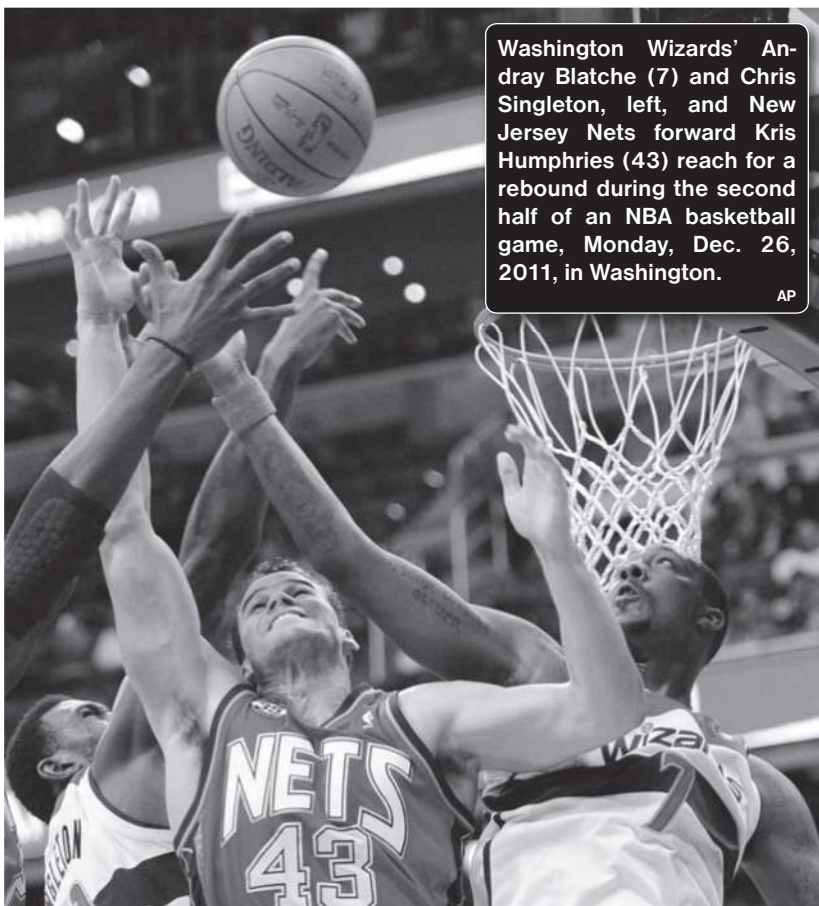
Kyle Lowry had 20 points and 12 assists for Houston, which closed within four in the fourth quarter, but the Magic were able to hit some timely 3-pointers late to help secure the victory.

Pacers 91, Pistons 79

In Indianapolis, Roy Hibbert had 16 points and 14 rebounds to help Indiana defeat Detroit.

David West, Indiana's big free agent addition, had 11 points and 12 rebounds, even though he made just 3 of 12 field goals.

The Pacers shot just 37 percent from



Washington Wizards' Andray Blatche (7) and Chris Singleton, left, and New Jersey Nets forward Kris Humphries (43) reach for a rebound during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 26, 2011, in Washington. AP

the field, but got away with it because they outrebounded the Pistons 53-40. Indiana had 18 offensive rebounds and 14 second-chance points.

Jonas Jerebko and Rodney Stuckey each scored 17 points for the Pistons, who never led.

Raptors 104, Cavaliers 96

In Cleveland, rookie Kyrie Irving scored just six points and hardly played like the No. 1 draft pick as Toronto spoiled the Cleveland guard's NBA debut.

Irving, who played just 11 college games before turning pro, finished just 2 of 11 from the field—he made a meaningless 3-pointer in the final

minutes. The Cavs are counting on the 19-year-old to turn around a team that won just 19 games last season.

Toronto, which went only 22-60 last season, won its first game under coach Dwane Casey.

Thunders 104, Timberwolves 100

In Minneapolis, Kevin Durant scored 33 points to lead Oklahoma City to victory over Minnesota.

Russell Westbrook added 28 points, six assists and six rebounds for the Thunder, who have started off a season loaded with expectations at 2-0.

Kevin Love had 22 points, 12 re-

bounds and five assists for the Timberwolves, who hung with the Western Conference favorites all game long.

Nuggets 115, Mavericks 93

In Dallas, Ty Lawson scored 20 of his 27 points in the first half for Denver, which faced little resistance on its way to victory over Dallas.

The reigning champions were drubbed for a second straight game, routinely giving up easy baskets in both. They allowed Denver to score 20 unanswered points in the second quarter and were down by 33 late in the third.

Denver, playing its season opener, scored on 19 of 25 second-quarter possessions. The Nuggets made only 12 baskets in the second half, yet still cruised to victory.

Dirk Nowitzki led Dallas with 20 points, and didn't play in the fourth quarter for the second straight game, yet another indication of how badly things are going for the Mavs.

Hornets 85, Suns 84

In Phoenix, Eric Gordon made a 20-footer from the top of the key with 4.2 seconds to play in his New Orleans debut to give the Hornets a victory over Phoenix.

Gordon, who came to New Orleans in the trade that sent Chris Paul to the Los Angeles Clippers, gave his team its only lead since the first two minutes of the second half.

Suns rookie Markieff Morris threw the ball away on Phoenix's final possession.

Gordon scored 20 points and Carl Landry added 14 for New Orleans.

Robin Lopez scored 22 points, more than he had in any game last season, for the Suns.

Spurs 95, Grizzlies 82

In San Antonio, Manu Ginobili scored 24 points as San Antonio got some pay-

back after its stunning playoff collapse last season, beating Memphis.

Tony Parker added 15 points and seven assists for the Spurs.

The Grizzlies remained winless on opening night since the franchise left Vancouver in 2001, and this blowout was a disappointment for last season's most improved team.

Trail Blazers 107, 76ers 103

In Portland, LaMarcus Aldridge had 25 points and seven rebounds as Portland opened its season with a win over Philadelphia.

Gerald Wallace added 21 points and nine rebounds for the Blazers, who let an early lead slip away but regained the upper hand in the second half by going small and picking up the pace.

Reserve Lou Williams had 12 of his 25 points in the second quarter and two clutch 3-pointers at the end for the Sixers, who open the season with a five-game road trip. The Sixers shot 48 percent from the field, but the Blazers took 97 shots to Philadelphia's 83.

Reds trade Wood, 2 others, to Cubs for Marshall



CINCINNATI

(AP)—The Cincinnati Reds acquired left-handed reliever Sean Marshall from the Chicago Cubs on Friday for young lefty starter Travis Wood and two other players.

It was the second time in a week that the Reds gave up several prospects for pitching help. They earlier sent four players, including Edinson Volquez, to San Diego for starter Mat Latos.

The 29-year-old, 6-foot-7 Marshall was 6-6 with a 2.26 ERA last season. He had five saves. The Reds have been in talks to try to re-sign closer Francisco Cordero, who became a free agent after last season.

"Sean has been one of the best and most durable relievers in baseball the last couple of seasons," Reds general manager Walt Jocketty said in a statement.

The 24-year-old Wood made 35 starts for the Reds over two seasons. He finished 6-6 with a 4.84 ERA in 2011, with a stint in Triple-A after struggling early in the year.

The Cubs also get 24-year-old outfielder Dave Sappelt, who batted .243 in 38 games with the Reds, and 19-year-old infield prospect Ronald Torreyes, who batted .356 in 67 games for Class-A Dayton.

"Twenty-four-year old left-handed starters who have already had success in the big leagues don't grow on trees," Cubs president of baseball operations Theo Epstein said. "We had to give up a great relief pitcher in Sean Marshall and someone we were proud to call a Cub, but we think to acquire Wood and the two young guys, it was worth doing."

Wood made 17 starts for the Reds in 2010, going 5-4 with a 3.51 ERA. He took a perfect game into the ninth inning against the Philadelphia Phillies before giving up a double to Carlos Ruiz, and left after finishing the ninth with the game scoreless.

Wood began last season in the Reds' starting rotation, made 10 starts for Louisville, then returned to Cincinnati. He also had four relief appearances for Cincinnati.

NBA Commissioner Stern hears boos at Dallas opener

DALLAS (AP)—NBA Commissioner David Stern opened his lockout-delayed season by hearing boos from Mavericks fans.

Stern was in Dallas for the NBA finals rematch between the Mavericks and Heat, and he was on the court for the start of the Mavs' banner-raising ceremony honoring their first championship. The jeers came as soon as he started speaking, but he quickly turned them into cheers by offering his congratulations to team owner Mark Cuban.

Cuban's often contentious relationship with Stern could've been as much of a reason for the boos as the lockout, which pushed the opener from Nov. 1 to Christmas and cut the season by 16 games.

Cuban and Miami's Micky Arison were among five owners who voted against the labor deal. Stern said "it doesn't send any signal whatsoever" that the two owners in the most recent finals were against the agreement.

Stern said Arison only objected to the revenue sharing. He also pointed out that Cuban was part of the labor relations committee and the planning committee.

"(Cuban) might not have been enamored with the final outcome because it takes away the advantage that overspending can give you," Stern said.

Stern also said he could have done a better job of explaining his reasons for blocking a proposed trade of Chris Paul from the league-owned Hornets to the Lakers, only to later agree to a deal that sent Paul to the Clippers. He said that "lost in the frenzy" over his action was the fact he quashed the deal in his role as the owners' representative looking out for the best interests of the Hornets—not as the commissioner looking out for the best interests of the league as a whole.

"Our view was that the best thing was for New Orleans to be a young team," he said.

Stern blamed himself for not clarifying that sooner.

"I don't think it affected the integrity of the league," he said. "I do think I could have done a better communications job. ... It's a job that, as the owners' representative, I was stuck with. But I think that it was better to have me do it than a group of owners do it because I have the singular focus of doing what's best."

The booing Mavs fans may not have realized they had Stern to thank for getting Lamar Odom to Dallas. Odom was supposed to have been in the Lakers-Hornets deal; when he wasn't, he was so upset that the club didn't want him that he asked to be traded.

After the Dallas-Miami game, Stern went to Oklahoma City for the opener

between the Thunder and Orlando. Magic star Dwight Howard is trying to force his way to the team of his preference, just like Paul did. Asked if that was bad for the league, Stern said it's always happened, using Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Wilt Chamberlain as examples.

"That's the beauty of the soap opera," Stern said. "It will play out like it plays out."

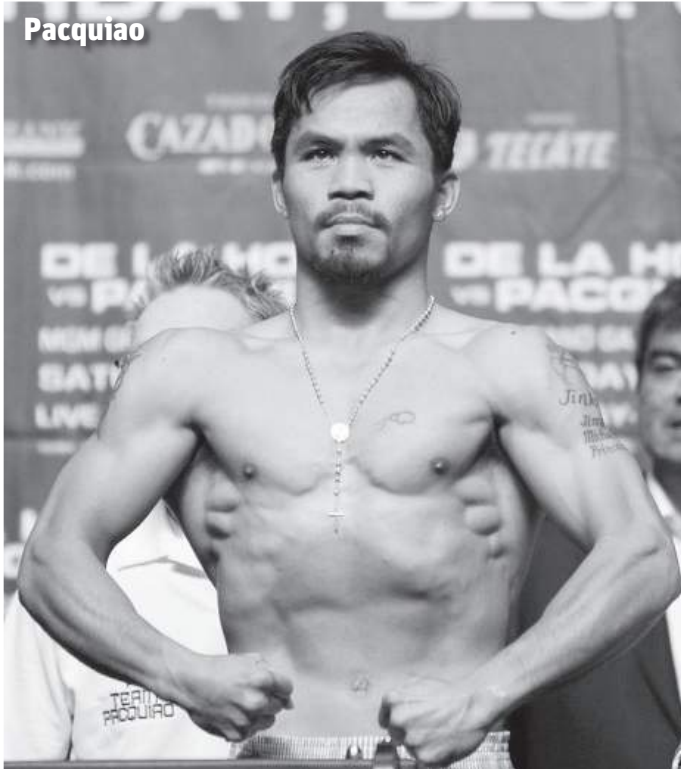
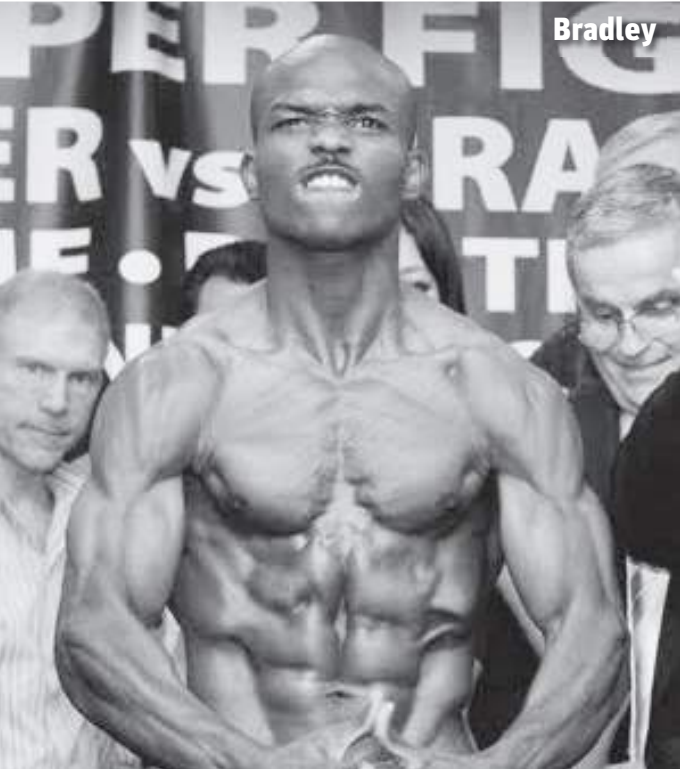
Stern had compliments for another superstar he was about to watch, LeBron James.

"I see a level of acceptance and maturity," Stern said. "He's clearly saying he might've said a few things differently, etcetera, and he's going to let his talent do the talking. I think that's pretty exciting because he's got some pretty exciting talent. So we're happy for him and we're looking forward to how the season winds up."

So, how does he expect the season to wind up?

"I said to Mark, 'It's ironic, the most underrated team in the league is the NBA champion,'" Stern said. "I think Dallas has a pretty good roster. ... I said before last season, 'I think we're going to have to play the season. We're not mailing the trophy to Miami.' It turns out, we mailed it to Dallas. We'll see what happens this year—but Miami really seems formidable with those three superstars."

Bradley would give Pacquiao a lot of problems



BOXING

International Boxing Federation/WBA light welterweight champion Lamont Peterson is in the running for a fight against WBO welterweight champion Manny Pacquiao for early 2012.

Peterson recently defeated Amir Khan earlier this month to put himself in the position to be one of the candidates for Pacquiao's next bout. However, Peterson thinks that his former conqueror WBO light welterweight champion Timothy Bradley would give Pacquiao

tremendous problems with his style of fighting and could possibly pull off the upset.

Bradley beat Peterson with ease two years ago, winning every round of a 12 round decision in 2009. Peterson reportedly thinks Bradley has more than enough skills to shut Pacquiao down and take his World Boxing Organization title if given the chance.

Bob Arum, Pacquiao's promoter, recently signed Bradley with the intention of matching him against Pacquiao. Bradley is now in the running for Pacquiao's next fight in 2012 after Floyd Mayweather Jr., the guy

that Arum supposedly wanted to match Pacquiao up with against, was sentenced to serve a 90 day jail sentence starting in January.

Arum now needs to find a suitable opponent for Pacquiao to fight and the options aren't that appealing.

The options for Pacquiao are as follows:

Miguel Cotto—Pacquiao already beat Cotto decisively by a 12th round TKO in 2009, and Cotto looked so bad in mentally and physically crumbling that it's difficult to imagine having to sit through another mismatch between these two fighters.

Lamont Peterson—A good opponent if Pacquiao can get the fight. Golden Boy Promotions has appealed Khan's loss to Peterson, and he may be forced to fight a rematch with Khan. He'll chose to take vacate the titles if he's forced to fight Khan again and there is the option of facing Pacquiao there for him.

Juan Manuel Marquez—A good fight as well, but it might be difficult to put this fight together and it's doubtful Arum would want to take the risk of seeing him beat Pacquiao again.

Timothy Bradley—A dangerous threat to Pacquiao because

of his speed, skills and excellent inside fighting ability. He could give Pacquiao a lot of problems, particularly with the way that Pacquiao appears to have lost his legs. (www.boxingnews24.com)

THUNDERCATS

From Page 28

fense and scored one goal.

Also playing for the Thundercats are Greg Sakisat, Raphael Zapanta, Zhi Peng Lin, Yong Park, Joseph Ichihara, Daniel Agulto, Brian Lee, and Mark Huang. Steve McKagan coaches the Thundercats.

Before dueling Mean Machine, the Thundercats debuted in the league against IT&E and the match resulted in a draw, 2-2.

Lee tallied both goals for the Thundercats, hitting one each in the first and second half, while Jin Han Yoon and Dae Min Jeon logged one goal apiece for IT&E in the final 20 minutes of the match.

Also suiting up for IT&E are Yi Shan Wang, Greg Kim, Evert Van Der Maas, Jacob Choi, Joon Lee, Chris Park, Moon Bin Hong, Jehn Joyner, Joshia Borja, and Taek Han Yoon.

After the draw against the Thundercats, IT&E gained their first win via forfeiture against Mean Machine.

Only three teams are competing in the boys U18 division

after one squad decided to pull out in the last minute. They will play six games with the team with the most wins after the double-round robin ruling the age group.

The second round started last Tuesday night with the Thundercats and IT&E squaring off anew. Results of the match were unavailable as of press time.

Meanwhile, Astig Futsal won the lone U17 game played so far, as it clobbered Go Green Team, 12-1.

Kyla Ito and Jeraldine Castillo recorded four goals each for Astig Futsal's lopsided win. Melody Johnson added two, while Lily Williams and Maica Aniana contributed one apiece. Maria Castro was the only Go Green Team player to score a goal last week.

Go Green Team dropped to a 1-1-0 win-loss-draw record with its first win coming off forfeiture against the Ayuyus.

Astig Futsal and the Ayuyus were scheduled to collide last Thursday and the latter was also set to face Go Green Team last Tuesday. Results of the both matches were unavailable as of press time.

RASTGUIY

From Page 28

two sets to thwart their foes, 6-1, 6-2, and advance to the semifinals.

In the semis, the Oceania ITF Touring Team members were paired against fellow unseeded duo Isabelle Coman and Samantha Oliver, who barged into the Final Four after a walkover win against top-ranked Janyhi Clark and Nina Paripovich. Rastguiy and Kamoe went on to secure the finals berth at the

upper half of the 15-team draw after another straight set victory, 6-1, 6-0.

The second-seeded pair of Victoria Hartland and Tiana Windbuchler took the finals seat in the lower half draw after posting wins over Aimee Bell and Aki Shimahara, 6-0, 6-0; against Kelani Chene and Vinda Teally, 1-6, 4-5 (retired); and versus No. 4 pick Olivia Gillard and Caitlin Ward, 6-4, 7-6 (7).

In the championship game, Hartland and Windbuchle easily clinched the first set, 6-2. Then in the second set, Rast-

guiy and Kamoe played their hearts out before bowing in a close game, 5-7.

Rastguiy also joined the girls U12 singles division in Auckland and won her opening match in the 40-player field against Isabelle Coman, 6-1, 6-2, before losing to No. 3 seed Paige Alter in three hard fought sets, 3-6, 6-4, 7-10.

The CNMI junior netter was scheduled to participate in the girls U14 singles and doubles, too, but was forced to withdraw due to a neck injury.

The tournament in Auckland

ran from Dec. 17 to 23 and Rastguiy left New Zealand before Christmas. She is now in Korea with family members and will return to Saipan on Jan. 4.

Before competing in Auckland, Rastguiy also made stops in Hamilton and Gisborne. She advanced to the semifinals of the girls U12 singles and quarterfinals of the doubles events in the 2011 Waikato Christmas Junior Open in Hamilton. Then in Gisborne for the 2010 Poverty Bay East Coast Junior Open, Rastguiy played in the girls U14 singles finals.

MILLER

From Page 28

onships in Fiji last August and dominating the 2011 North Pacific Qualifying Tournament in Guam.

However, in Australia, Miller will be playing in the U18 division, the same age group Jones will be competing in.

"It will be tough, but I hope

to have good results in my first U18 tournament in Australia. It will be great to make it all the way to the finals," said Miller, who was also part of the Oceania ITF Touring Team (U15) that joined several tournaments in New Zealand three years ago.

"I know we will be up against some of the top U18 players in Australia, New Zealand, and other countries in Oceania. It's a totally different play-

ing field, so we will just give our best and show what we learned from our training sessions," the Saipan Southern High School student said.

In the past two months, Miller trained under Race three times a week. With Race going off-island mid this month, Miller is now on his own. He said he pushes himself to train on weekdays with each session lasting for one and a half hours.

"I hit balls with my fellow junior players and do physical training too, like sprinting on both ends of the court," said Miller, who usually trains at the Pacific Islands Club.

After the competition in Wodonga, Miller and company will return to Melbourne and will have an opportunity to watch the preliminary round games of the prestigious 2011 Australian Open.

SDA

From Page 28

a group of SDA students (7th and 8th graders) going for an educational trip this year.

Last month's Thanksgiving race started and ended at the SDA parking lot in San

Antonio with riders competing in the 30-kilometer and 60-km events.

Veteran rider Lewie Tenorio topped the 60-km road bike race with a time of 2:08:12, beating Ariel Garcia (2:20:02) and Aldrin Sta. Ana (2:34:45 mark). In the women's division, Mieke Carey finished

fourth overall and was the first female to complete the race, timing in at 2:28:12. Heather Kennedy finished second place with her 3:08:09.

In the MTB category, Nap Dizon and Joann Salazar ruled the men's and women's divisions after clocking in at 2:20:02 and 3:21:31, respectively.

Ken Pierson reigned supreme in the 30-km race with a time of 1:14:38, finishing ahead of Enrique Suba (1:14:50) and Nelson Poguduo (1:14:58). In the women's division, Regina Sebi-al submitted 1:28:55 to prevail over Angie Mister (1:31:02) and Jodel Fernandez (1:37:29). (*Roselyn B. Monroy*)

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	12	3	0	.800	464	321
N.Y. Jets	8	7	0	.533	360	344
Buffalo	6	9	0	.400	351	385
Miami	5	10	0	.333	310	296

South

y-Houston	10	5	0	.667	359	255
Tennessee	8	7	0	.533	302	295
Jacksonville	4	11	0	.267	224	316
Indianapolis	2	13	0	.133	230	411

North

x-Baltimore	11	4	0	.733	354	250
x-Pittsburgh	11	4	0	.733	312	218
Cincinnati	9	6	0	.600	328	299
Cleveland	4	11	0	.267	209	294

West

Denver	8	7	0	.533	306	383
Oakland	8	7	0	.533	333	395
San Diego	7	8	0	.467	368	351
Kansas City	6	9	0	.400	205	335

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

N.Y. Giants	8	7	0	.533	363	386
Dallas	8	7	0	.533	355	316
Philadelphia	7	8	0	.467	362	318
Washington	5	10	0	.333	278	333

South

x-New Orleans	12	3	0	.800	502	322
x-Atlanta	9	6	0	.600	357	326
Carolina	6	9	0	.400	389	384
Tampa Bay	4	11	0	.267	263	449

North

y-Green Bay	14	1	0	.933	515	318
x-Detroit	10	5	0	.667	433	342
Chicago	7	8	0	.467	336	328
Minnesota	3	12	0	.200	327	432

West

y-San Francisco	12	3	0	.800	346	202
Seattle	7	8	0	.467	301	292
Arizona	7	8	0	.467	289	328
St. Louis	2	13	0	.133	166	373

x-clinched playoff spot

y-clinched division

Yesterday's Game

New Orleans 45, Atlanta 16

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	1	0	1.000	—
New Jersey	1	0	1.000	—
Toronto	1	0	1.000	—
Philadelphia	0	1	.000	1
Boston	0	1	.000	1

Southeast Division

Charlotte	1	0	1.000	—
Miami	1	0	1.000	—
Orlando	1	1	.500	1/2
Atlanta	0	0	.000	1/2
Washington	0	1	.000	1

Central Division

Indiana	1	0	1.000	—
Chicago	1	1	.500	1/2
Cleveland	0	1	.000	1
Milwaukee	0	1	.000	1
Detroit	0	1	.000	1

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

San Antonio	1	0	1.000	—
New Orleans	1	0	1.000	—
Houston	0	1	.000	1
Memphis	0	1	.000	1
Dallas	0	2	.000	1 1/2

Northwest Division

Oklahoma City	2	0	1.000	—
Denver	1	0	1.000	1/2
Portland	1	0	1.000	1/2
Utah	0	0	.000	1
Minnesota	0	1	.000	1 1/2

Pacific Division

L.A. Clippers	1	0	1.000	—
Sacramento	1	0	1.000	—
Golden State	1	1	.500	1/2
Phoenix	0	1	.000	1
L.A. Lakers	0	2	.000	1 1/2

Yesterday's Games

Toronto 104, Cleveland 96

Charlotte 96, Milwaukee 95

Indiana 91, Detroit 79

Orlando 104, Houston 95

New Jersey 90, Washington 84

Oklahoma City 104, Minnesota 100

Denver 115, Dallas 93

San Antonio 95, Memphis 82

New Orleans 85, Phoenix 84

Sacramento 100, L.A. Lakers 91

Portland 107, Philadelphia 103

Golden State 99, Chicago 91

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GBL IT&E Cup Finals and Awardees

PHOTOS By WALTER CEPEDA SUTHERLAND AND ROSELYN B. MONROYO



Proa's Jack Lizama, third left, receives a medal after winning the Finals MVP award.

Proa players and coaches pose with their championship trophy and organizers of the GBL caging.



Mythical Team members FGC's Lerio Pagarao, right, Proa's Pete Iguel, second right and Dan Barcinas, third left, and Mobil's Jun Estolas, third right, pose with organizers and Brad Ruszala, fourth right, of league sponsor IT&E during the awards ceremony last week.



FGC players receive the runner-up trophy.



Proa's Marvin Rabauliman gets away with an easy layup.

Proa's Pete Iguel, left drives against FGC's Noel David during Game 2 of their title series in the GBL IT&E Cup last week at the Garapan Basketball Court.



FGC's Zack Babauta is defended by Proa's Keoni Chariton.

FGC's Lerio Pagarao tries to find an open space against Proa's defense.



Proa's Peter Mendiola pulls up for a shot against FGC's Rex Yabut.



FGC's Banjo Basila, right, dribbles against Proa's Dan Barcinas.

Brees sets passing mark, Saints top Falcons

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Nets fight back to beat Wizards

PAGE 25



28 WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2011

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Rastguiy reaches doubles finals in NZ

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CNMI junior player Negahr Rastguiy capped her New Zealand trip with a finals stint in the U12 doubles division of the Tennis Auckland 2011 Christmas Junior Tournaments at the Nicholson Park.



Rastguiy teamed up with Fiji's Mulan Kamoe and the Oceania ITF Touring Team bets won three straight matches to march into the finals. The duo first took on New Zealand's Melenia Kai-taeifo and Sylvie Ruahe and prevailed after only two sets, 6-1, 6-1.

Next up for the visitors were the third-seeded pair of Victoria Hockley and Alysha Nowacki and again Rastguiy and Kamoe only needed

See RASTGUIY on Page 26

Negahr Rastguiy, seen here going for a return during the CNMI Junior Championships last April at the AMP courts, made it to the finals of the U12 doubles event in Auckland, New Zealand.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO



Miller joins Oceania ITF Touring Team

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



The CNMI will now have four representatives to the Oceania ITF Touring Team that will compete in Australia next month after Christian Miller confirmed his entry to the elite squad.

Miller will be joining fellow Commonwealth players Rafael Jones, Thea Minor, and Tammy Ackerman in the Land Down Under to participate in two events—the Margaret Court Tournament from Jan. 6 to 10 in Albury and the Victoria Junior Grasscourt Championships that will run from Jan. 11 to 15 in Wodonga. The four CNMI bets will leave Saipan on Jan. 1 and return on Jan. 20.

The 16-year-old Miller initially had second thoughts of competing in Australia after getting an invite from Oceania Tennis Federation as joining the touring team means he needs to miss school for two weeks.

"I could not commit early because of school commitments so it was only last month when I confirmed to coach Jeff [Race] that I will be going. This is a great opportunity and I am glad I will not miss it," Miller said in a telephone in-



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Christian Miller, seen here going for a backhand tournament during the PIC tournament this year, will be joining the Oceania ITF Touring Team to Australia next month.

interview with *Saipan Tribune*.

Miller was selected on the Pacific Touring Team after making it to the finals of the U15 division of the 2011 Pacific Oceania Junior Champi-

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SDA hosts MTB/road race on Jan. 22



The Seventh Day Adventist School will host the first bike race of 2012 with the staging of an MTB/road event on Jan. 22.

The race will start and end at Paupau Beach and registration and go time will be announced later. Entrance fee is only \$10.

For the road bike category,

the course will be the "five corners" with bikers heading up to the Radar tower, Suicide Cliff lookout, Bird Island, Grotto, and Banzai, before returning to Paupau. In the MTB division, riders will go to FEBC, Kimikaze and Autobahn trails, Santa Clause Lane, and Banzai before heading back to the starting/finish line.

The Top 5 finishers in each

division will receive medals and additional prizes, while two brand new mountain bikes will be raffled off after the race. Raffle tickets for the Giant 2011 model and Solar 2000 bike can be purchased at Bike Pro, Taro Sue, and Ride NMI.

For more information, contact Antonee at Saipan SDA Clinic at 234-6323 or Girlie at 285-1881.

The MTB/road race is a follow-up of last month's SDA Thanksgiving Road & MTB Race and aims to raise funds for

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Bikers competing in a local event early this year head out of the Paupau Beach parking lot, which will be the starting/finish line for next month's SDA MTB/road race.

Thundercats, IT&E in win column of futsal league

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



Round 1 of the boys U18 division contest in the 2011 Saipan Soccer School Youth Futsal League was completed last week with the Thundercats and IT&E barging into the win column.

The Thundercats notched their first win in the double-round robin competition after a 3-0 triumph over Mean Machine at the TSL Sports Complex. The Thundercats and Mean Machine struggled offensively in the first 20 minutes of play before the former found their rhythm in the second half to shut out their foe.

Timothy Tawanpiy canned a pair of goals for the Thundercats, while Don Cabrera, who played goalie in the first half, concentrated on the team's of-

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Thundercats striker stops the ball while a Mean Machine player plays defense during their game in the boys U18 division of the youth futsal league last week at the TSL Sports Complex.